

**NOMINATIONS OF GEN MARTIN E. DEMPSEY,
USA, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE
OF GENERAL AND REAPPOINTMENT AS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF
STAFF; AND ADM JAMES A. WINNEFELD,
JR., USN, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE
GRADE OF ADMIRAL AND REAPPOINTMENT
AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS
OF STAFF**

THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2013

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:36 a.m. in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Reed, Nelson, McCaskill, Hagan, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Kaine, King, Inhofe, McCain, Sessions, Chambliss, Wicker, Ayotte, and Graham.

Committee staff members present: Peter K. Levine, staff director; and Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Richard W. Fieldhouse, professional staff member; Michael J. Kuiken, professional staff member; Gerald J. Leeling, general counsel; Mariah K. McNamara, special assistant to the staff director; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; Roy F. Phillips, professional staff member; Russell L. Shaffer, counsel; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: John A. Bonsell, minority staff director; Daniel C. Adams, minority associate counsel; Adam J. Barker, professional staff member; Steven M. Barney, minority counsel; William S. Castle, minority general counsel; Samantha L. Clark, minority associate counsel; Allen M. Edwards, professional staff member; Thomas W. Goffus, professional staff member; Ambrose R. Hock, professional staff member; Anthony J. Lazarski, professional staff member; Daniel A. Lerner, professional staff member; Lucian L. Niemeyer, professional staff member; and Robert M. Soofer, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Lauren M. Gillis and Daniel J. Harder.

Committee members' assistants present: Carolyn Chuhta, assistant to Senator Reed; Jeff Fatora, assistant to Senator Nelson; Jason Rauch, assistant to Senator McCaskill; Brian Nagle, assistant to Senator Hagan; Mara Boggs, assistant to Senator Manchin; Patrick Day, assistant to Senator Shaheen; Moran Banai and Brooke Jamison, assistants to Senator Gillibrand; Ethan Saxon, assistant to Senator Blumenthal; Marta McLellan Ross, assistant to Senator Donnelly; Nick Ikeda, assistant to Senator Hirono; Karen Courington, assistant to Senator Kaine; Jim Catella and Steve Smith, assistants to Senator King; Christian Brose, assistant to Senator McCain; Lenwood Landrum, assistant to Senator Sessions; Todd Harmer, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Joseph Lai, assistant to Senator Wicker; Brad Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte; and Craig Abele, assistant to Senator Graham.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody.

The committee meets this morning to consider the nominations of General Martin Dempsey and Admiral James Winnefeld, both of whom have been nominated to continue in their current positions: General Dempsey as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Admiral Winnefeld as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thank you both for your service and for your willingness to continue to serve in these positions of huge responsibility.

I would also like to welcome and to thank your family members, some of whom are with us here this morning. Our military families, as you well know, are a vital part of the overall success and well-being of our Armed Forces, and we appreciate greatly their unwavering support and their many sacrifices, usually during the course of long military careers. During your opening remarks, please feel free to reintroduce your family members to our committee.

The foremost duty of the leadership positions to which General Dempsey and Admiral Winnefeld have been renominated is to ensure that our service men and women have what they need to win wars, to succeed in their missions, and to secure peace. Our nominees have carried out their duties with energy and with commitment. It is a testament to the quality of their service that the President has nominated them to continue in their positions.

I have had frequent occasions to seek the views of General Dempsey and Admiral Winnefeld over the years in both public and private settings. Even on those few occasions when I have disagreed with their assessments and recommendations, I have found their positions to be thoughtful and well reasoned.

If confirmed, our nominees will face a series of continuing challenges.

In Syria, Assad is using airstrikes, missiles, helicopters, tanks, and artillery to attack the Syrian people. He is targeting civilians in residential neighborhoods, in marketplaces, in schools, in places of worship. He has used chemical weapons against the insurgents. He is increasingly relying on foreign fighters from Iran and Hezbollah to sustain his grip on power. To date, his actions have killed more than 100,000 Syrians, led more than a million to flee the country, forced more than 4 million more to become internally

displaced, leveled entire villages and neighborhoods, and motivated the Syrian people to rise up against him.

I look forward to hearing the nominees' views on the steps that might be taken to increase the military pressure on Assad in support of the administration's goal of convincing the Assad regime and its supporters, including Russia, that the current military momentum towards the regime cannot last in the face of a major insurgency that has the support of both the Syrian people and an international coalition and that a political settlement that transitions Syria to a post-Assad regime that is inclusive of and protective of all elements of the Syrian society is the only solution.

In Afghanistan, while the campaign is on track to transition responsibility for the country's security from coalition forces to the Afghan security forces, and U.S. and coalition forces continue to draw down over the next year and a half, significant challenges remain to secure the hard-fought gains. Among those challenges is putting the U.S.-Afghanistan strategic partnership on a sound footing for the long term, including through the conclusion of a bilateral status of forces agreement to ensure that our troops have the legal protections necessary for any post-2014 U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. Recent statements by President Karzai have complicated negotiation of such an agreement, and I will be interested in what our witnesses have to say about the prospects for a successful negotiation, as well as what the status is of the efforts in Afghanistan militarily.

In mid-March of this year, Secretary Hagel responded to North Korea's provocative behavior by announcing a series of steps to improve our homeland missile defense capability, including the planned deployment of 14 additional ground-based interceptors in Alaska by 2014.

On July 5, our ground-based midcourse defense system had a flight test failure. This test failure, along with an earlier failure, reinforces the need to pursue a "fly-before-you-buy" approach which demonstrates through realistic flight tests that the system will work as intended before deploying any additional interceptors. And I would welcome our witnesses' comments on that issue as well.

The defense authorization bill that we will bring to the Senate floor includes provisions that give the Secretary of Defense greater flexibility to transfer detainees from Guantanamo. And I will be interested in our witnesses' views on these proposed changes in our defense authorization bill.

And lastly but far from leastly, we must confront the growing challenge of sequestration. All of the things that are military needs to do, responding to regional crises, maintaining readiness, training and equipping our forces, taking care of our service members and their families, depend upon appropriate levels of funding. The damaging effect that sequestration is already having and will continue to have unless addressed and remedied and reversed—that damaging effect on the readiness of our military must be addressed and addressed in a way that protects the vitality of our forces.

So it is against the backdrop of these and many more challenges, both foreign and domestic, that we consider these two very important nominations.

Again, we welcome both of you today. We look forward to your testimony.

I now call on Senator Inhofe.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I mentioned to you, we have another hearing simultaneously with this two floors up, so I will be going back and forth.

Over the last 4 years, our military has suffered a steep and damaging drop in capabilities and readiness. This administration has cut nearly \$600 billion already from the defense budget, reduced end strength by more than 100,000 personnel, reduced the size of the naval fleet, and cut hundreds of Air Force combat aircraft. Training and reset accounts have been gutted and modernization programs are being starved of resources. On the horizon is the addition of \$500 billion in cuts if we are unable to find a solution for the sequestration, which you know, is kind of ridiculous. When you tell normal people that we have 18 percent of our budget is the military budget, and yet we are taking 50 percent of the cuts, it is totally unreasonable. It lets you know the priorities of this administration.

The longer we allow our force to deteriorate, the harder and more expensive it will be to repair and rebuild.

Earlier this year, Chairman Levin and I sent a letter to Secretary Hagel requesting a detailed plan on how the Department would allocate the additional \$52 billion in sequester cuts slated for fiscal year 2014. The response we received was woefully light on details but made clear that further cuts in fiscal year 2014 will significantly amplify the pain our military is already enduring.

Admiral Winnefeld, you were asked earlier this year about the impact of the budget cuts on the military, and you responded. And I have to say it was a very courageous response. And I am quoting now. "There could be for the first time in my career instances where we may be asked to respond to a crisis and we will have to say that we cannot." Admiral, I feel that we are well on our way to this unthinkable reality.

Recently the Department has undertaken actions internally to address some critical readiness issues, including the resumption of flight operations for the Air Force after many squadrons—I believe 16—had been grounded for over 3 months. And while this development is welcome news, I remain concerned over the vital training and maintenance activities the services that remain curtailed and nearly 700,000 DOD civilians are still being furloughed. What I find most concerning, however, is that much of this pain has been unnecessary and could have been avoided all along.

Earlier this year, I introduced a bill that would have provided for the Department with flexibility to allocate the sequester cuts in a way that minimizes risk. I think at that time, all the chiefs agreed that would be a better—it would be still devastating but not as devastating. And when we come back and put our squadrons in flying status—again, I am going to conduct my own test on this—and we have already looked into it—on how much more it costs now to retrain, get people back up in proficiency than it would have had if we had just stayed with it.

Our actions at home do not occur in a vacuum. Around the world, we are seeing the effects of declining military capability and the absence of American leadership. From the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific, our adversaries are emboldened and there are growing doubts about the United States among our allies.

I raise these issues today because I am deeply concerned by the current state of our military. As our military is experiencing an unprecedented deterioration of readiness and capabilities, I ask our witnesses what advice they are giving the President on these matters.

General Dempsey, at what point will you advise the President that the defense cuts will result in the dire scenario you laid out before our committee in February? And I would quote. You said, "if ever the force is so degraded and so unready, and then we're asked to use it, it would be immoral."

General Dempsey, you also warned in testimony to this committee that further defense cuts will, "severely limit our ability to implement our defense strategy. It will put the Nation at greater risk of coercion, and it will break faith with the men and women in uniform." The Service Chiefs are already talking about combat forces and capabilities that are starting to hollow out. We had a discussion about this. You know, are we hollowing out, or are we already a hollow force?

I am afraid to remind you of the comments from the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, who stated earlier this year, "In almost 50 years in intelligence, I don't remember that we've had a more diverse array of threats and crisis situations around the world to deal with" than we have today.

So that is our problem, Mr. Chairman, and that is why we are having this hearing today.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Inhofe.

So let me call upon you, Chairman Dempsey. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF GEN MARTIN E. DEMPSEY, USA FOR RE-APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND RE-APPOINTMENT AS CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

General DEMPSEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Inhofe, distinguished Senators. I am honored to appear before you today on this 18th day of July as the 18th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I am also thankful, thankful for the confidence placed in me 2 years ago, for the continued confidence of our commander in chief and the Secretary of Defense, and for the privilege of serving alongside Admiral Sandy Winnefeld and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Of course, I am also very thankful for the unwavering love and support and tireless service in her own way of my wife Deanie, who is seated behind me, not to mention our three children and our seven grandchildren. And yes, that is plus four since my confirmation hearing 2 years ago, with one more due any day now to make it a total of eight.

Chairman LEVIN. I am sure if it were allowed you would, for that reason alone, love to be appointed a third time. [Laughter.]

General DEMPSEY. Well, I do not know. Actually quite the opposite. I would like to spend some time with them when the opportunity arises.

But I also want to mention I notice that my nephew Michael Dempsey, who is a student at Wake Forest University and home for the summer, has joined us today. We are awful proud of him as well.

But more than anything else, I am thankful for the opportunity to defend our Nation alongside the men and women who wear its cloth. When I witness their courage and their skill, I am very much reminded of the inscription that is on the Private Soldier Monument called "Old Simon" at Antietam Battlefield that goes like this. "Not for themselves but for their country."

It is on their behalf and in that spirit that I am here today. My only purpose is to be worthy of their service every day and in every decision, to strengthen the relationship of trust that the American armed forces has with the American people, to meet our sacred obligation to keep our Nation immune from coercion.

We cannot take this relationship for granted. Historic transitions are testing our ability to meet our obligations. We are in the midst of a difficult fiscal correction to restore the economic foundation of power. And we are also transitioning from war to an even more uncertain and dangerous security landscape.

So even as the dollars are in decline, risk is on the rise. If we do not manage these transitions well, our military power will become less credible. We will foreclose options and we will leave gaps in our security.

It does not have to be that way. We can and we must lead through these transitions. We have it within us to stay strong as a global leader and as a reliable ally. We can make our military more affordable without making our Nation less secure. To do this, we need to get at least four things right.

First, we need to get our strategy right. This means aligning our aims with our abilities. Strategy is nothing if it is not about setting priorities. Even as we rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region, we still have to defend the homeland from cyber, terrorist, and missile attack, achieve our objectives in Afghanistan, deter provocation on the Korean Peninsula, assure and assist allies across the globe, set a more responsive posture for a new normal of combustible violence. As we respond to new contingencies, we must come to terms with the risks and costs to these existing obligations. We may have to do less, but we should never do it less well.

Second, we need to get our force right. This means keeping our military ready and balanced. So far, we are getting it wrong. We have already lost readiness that will take more time and additional cost to restore. We are already out of balance due to the magnitude and the mechanism—not to mention the steep descent—of budget cuts. But it is not too late to recover. Remove the budget uncertainty. Slow down the drawdown. Help us make seemingly intractable institutional reforms. If we do this, we can build a joint force to meet the Nation's needs for a price that the Nation is able and willing to pay.

Third, we need to get our people right. This means strengthening our profession while keeping faith with the military family. Ours

is an uncommon profession, one that must value character as much as competence, that rests on a foundation of learning and leadership, that advances equal and ethical treatment for all its members, and that allows no quarter for sexual violence in all of its destructive forms. We also keep faith by making sure that our sons and daughters always go to war with the best training, the best leadership, and the best equipment. If we get this wrong, we will not get anything else right.

Finally, we need to get our relationships right. This means staying connected to our allies and, most importantly, to our fellow Americans. Now is the defining moment in our Nation's relationship with its 9/11 veterans. This generation is a national asset. They are ready to contribute in their communities. They need opportunities, handshakes, not handouts.

In the end, all relationships rest on trust. 2 years ago, I offered this image at my confirmation hearing to illustrate the vein of trust that must run from our men and women in uniform on the front lines back here and right back to our communities, our families, and the American people.

Today, it is still all about trust. Reconfirmation is at its base a reaffirmation of trust. I am humbled by the opportunity, and I will continue to work to earn it every day. I know you expect it and I know our men and women in uniform deserve it.

I would like to say one other thing before passing it back to you, Chairman. As you know, I am very careful not to presume confirmation, and in that spirit and not knowing when my last opportunity will be to appear before this body, I would like to thank you for your leadership of this committee and your support of America's men and women in uniform, as well as the two ranking members, Senator Inhofe, Senator McCain, with whom I have had the privilege of working for the last 2 years.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

General DEMPSEY. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Dempsey follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Admiral?

STATEMENT OF ADM JAMES A. WINNEFELD, JR., USN FOR RE-APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF ADMIRAL AND RE-APPOINTMENT AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Admiral WINNEFELD. Good morning, Chairman Levin and Ranking Member Inhofe and other distinguished members of the Committee on Armed Services.

I am also honored to appear before the committee this morning and to do so along with my friend and colleague and boss, General Marty Dempsey.

As you know, the military is a family business, and I am pleased to have with me today my wonderful wife Mary who has been such a supportive partner. She is behind me in the joint purple outfit. She has also been a tireless advocate for military families and wounded warriors and their caregivers, which has been a great

comfort to know that I have such a willing partner to do this sort of work.

My sons, James and Jonathan, would have been with us also today, but they are both at athletic tournaments, one at a state baseball championship tournament and the other at a golf tournament. But they remind me every day of the importance of honorable service.

It has been my privilege to serve the Nation as Vice Chairman for the past 2 years, and I am honored to have been asked by the President to serve another term.

If reconfirmed, I will continue to provide independent and objective advice to the Chairman, the Secretary of Defense, and the President on the shape, readiness, health, and use of the military instrument of power and to keep this committee informed and to give my best effort within the three portfolios of policy, investment, and people.

In a world growing more rather than less dangerous, at the same time we face considerable financial pressure. There are plenty of challenges in the three portfolios I just listed.

In the area of policy, as you know, we have been grappling with a host of threats to our National security interests around the world, in Afghanistan, in Iran, on the Korean Peninsula, with the continuing evolution of al Qaeda and its affiliates, in the aftermath of the Arab Awakening in Libya, Syria, Egypt, and other nations, and within the increasingly complex cyber domain.

In the investment portfolio, I was first confirmed by the Senate for this job on the same day the Budget Control Act was enacted, and we continue to cope with the financial challenges in the wake of that act that are quietly eroding our readiness to defend our Nation and have so impacted our ability to plan for tomorrow.

To the people portfolio, we are doing our best to manage the enormous uncertainty to which our military and civilian members and their families are being exposed during this budget crisis.

We are also expending considerable effort to ensure we are properly caring for our wounded, ill, and injured members and their families, as well as finding every lever we can to eliminate the pernicious insider threat of sexual assault.

These are only a few of the challenges we face, and much remains to be done in all three of these portfolios.

If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to serve our great Nation in uniform and pledge to work with this committee on the difficult choices required to achieve a capable and strategically shaped force that can keep America safe and our interests secure.

Allow me to close by saying how deeply grateful I am for the energy all the members of this committee and your able staff bring to these issues and for your longstanding support for our men and women in uniform and our civilians.

I look forward to taking your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Winnefeld follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Admiral.

Let me now ask you both the standard questions which we ask of our military nominees.

Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

General DEMPSEY. Yes, sir, I have.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree, when asked, to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the administration in power?

General DEMPSEY. Yes, sir.

Admiral WINNEFELD. I do.

Chairman LEVIN. Have you assumed any duties or undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

General DEMPSEY. No.

Admiral WINNEFELD. No, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established for requested communications, including questions for the record and hearings?

General DEMPSEY. I will.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

General DEMPSEY. Yes, sir.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

General DEMPSEY. They will.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before this committee?

General DEMPSEY. Yes, sir.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

General DEMPSEY. Yes, sir.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Okay. We are going to have a 7-minute first round of questions.

General, do you support finding additional ways to increase the military pressure on Assad?

General DEMPSEY. Senator, first, let me say that I am well aware of the human suffering and the tragedy unfolding in Syria and the effect that it is having not just inside Syria but on the region.

To your question about courses of action going forward, I support very strongly a whole-of-government approach that applies all the instruments of national power.

As for the military instrument of power, we have prepared options and articulated risks and opportunity costs to put additional pressure on the Assad regime.

Chairman LEVIN. Does the administration support additional training and equipping of the opposition?

General DEMPSEY. The administration has a governmental approach to the increased capability of the opposition.

Chairman LEVIN. Does that include training and equipping militarily?

General DEMPSEY. Not through the Department of Defense.

Chairman LEVIN. Through other means, whether it might be other countries?

General DEMPSEY. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. On Afghanistan, are the security forces of Afghanistan on track to be fully in charge of securing Afghanistan by December 2014 when the NATO combat mission ends?

General DEMPSEY. They are. General Dunford assesses that he will achieve his campaign objectives in developing the Afghan security forces. Now, he does also acknowledge there are some potential gaps that he will have better clarity on after this fighting season.

Chairman LEVIN. But he is basically on track.

General DEMPSEY. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, I am not going to ask you what advice you have given to the President on the residual force which might remain, assuming there is an agreement with the Afghans, after December 2014. I am not going to ask you what the advice is because that is advice you give confidentially to the President, and he has a right to your confidential advice.

My question, however, is the following. Have you given the President your advice relative to the size of the residual force?

General DEMPSEY. I have, sir. We have provided several options. As the Joint Chiefs, we have made a recommendation on the size and we have also expressed our view on when that announcement would best meet the campaign objectives.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, would you agree that legal protections for our troops, which would be provided for if we can reach a bilateral security agreement with Afghanistan, are essential to any long-term U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan?

General DEMPSEY. I do believe that.

Chairman LEVIN. So any presence after December of 2014 is dependent upon working out a bilateral agreement with the Afghans.

General DEMPSEY. That is right, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. I hope President Karzai is listening to that answer.

General DEMPSEY. I will travel over there on Friday night, sir, and have a planned office call with him.

Chairman LEVIN. I hope that you would make that clear, and also I believe that our committee—and I will not speak for others directly. If anyone does not feel this way, they will speak for themselves. But I think it is essential that he understand that there has to be a bilateral agreement that protects our troops for there to be a residual presence. And I happen to favor a residual presence, by the way.

General DEMPSEY. As do we.

Chairman LEVIN. And I happen to favor giving confidence to the Afghans that there is going to be continuing relations. But I do not want to just be silent in the face of what I consider to be President Karzai's unwise—a number of his comments which are very unwise in terms of whether or not he wants a residual presence or not. He sometimes acts like he does not want a residual presence even though it is very clear to me that the Afghan people do and so does

he, but he wants it on his terms, and it cannot just be on his terms. It has got to be on a mutually agreed basis. Would you agree with that?

General DEMPSEY. I do, sir. I also, though, would point out that our relationship and our interests in Afghanistan run deeper than just President Karzai.

Chairman LEVIN. Of course. And there is going to be an election next year, and I think you can also pass along to President Karzai that his assurances that he is not going to be a candidate in that election but that there will be an election are something that the committee members, I think probably most of whom have met with him, take seriously. And those statements of his matter to us.

Now, on the Guantanamo issue, do you favor—let me start over. We have in our defense authorization bill language which would give greater flexibility to the Department of Defense to transfer Guantanamo detainees to the United States for detention and trial, if it is determined to be in the U.S. national interest and if public safety concerns are addressed, to streamline the authority of the Secretary of Defense to transfer Guantanamo detainees to foreign countries. Do you support those provisions?

General DEMPSEY. Senator, what I support as the senior military leader of the armed forces of the United States is that we must have an option to detain prisoners. We cannot expect young men and women on the battlefield to have a single option which would be simply to kill. We must have a capture and detain option. So I support anything that will assure me that those young men and women will have that option.

Chairman LEVIN. And assuming that they have that assurance that there are a place or places—

General DEMPSEY. That is correct, sir.

Chairman LEVIN.—then given that qualification, one which I share, by the way, do you then support the language of the bill?

General DEMPSEY. I would have to see the bill. But if you are asking me has Guantanamo, the facility, tarnished the image of the United States globally, I think it has. And therefore, I would welcome any other solution.

Chairman LEVIN. On missile defense, we have had an assessment from Lieutenant General Formica, a letter providing the assessment that investing in additional sensor and discrimination capability for our homeland missile defense would be a more cost effective and less expensive near-term homeland missile defense option than deploying an east coast missile defense site, particularly since there is no current military requirement to deploy an east coast site.

Do you agree with those assessments of Vice Admiral Syring and General Formica? And do you agree that additional analysis is needed to determine whether it would be necessary to deploy an additional missile defense site in the United States in the future?

General DEMPSEY. I would like to ask the Vice Chairman who works that—but I will say I absolutely agree we should do the analysis before we make a decision on how best to meet that capability requirement.

Chairman LEVIN. Well, I am glad you gave me an opportunity to ask Admiral Winnefeld.

General DEMPSEY. I have been looking for an opportunity, Senator. [Laughter.]

Chairman LEVIN. Well, so have I. Thank you for giving me that opportunity. Admiral?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Chairman Levin, the way I have put it is I would spend my next dollar on missile defense on the sensor discrimination that you described. There is an oft-quoted saying in the United States military, "quantity has a quality all its own." In this case, quality has a quantity all its own. And if you can get better discrimination, you can have a better firing doctrine that would help you there.

I also think it is wise that we are doing the EISs, the environmental impact statements, for a potential east coast site. And as we watch the threat develop—and we are going to have to be very cognizant of that because it could develop quickly—it may become necessary to actually put into place a second site. We will play that as we have to.

Chairman LEVIN. But when you say we should do the EIS, the environmental impact statement, you mean before making a commitment to a site, that you complete those assessments.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir. I think we are planning on doing the EISs in the relatively near term, and I think they will be done naturally probably before there is a need to actually make a decision to go with an east coast site. But I also want to state we need to be cautious and very cognizant of where the trajectory is of the threat.

Chairman LEVIN. When you say they will be done naturally, you think they should be done.

Admiral WINNEFELD. They will be done. They should be done. I agree with doing them as a hedge, as part of our hedge strategy that we have always considered having an east coast site, just as a part of the hedge strategy with putting more interceptors—

Chairman LEVIN. I am just trying to get a clear answer. Do you believe they should be done before the decision is made as to whether any site is selected?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir, I think so.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, there was an article in today's Washington Post that reported South Korea wants to again delay the transfer of wartime operational control—I am sorry. I was looking for my card. I forget that we are using the timers, and I am glad that Peter Levine reminded me to look in front of me instead of down for a blue card. I keep looking for that blue card. I have gone over my time. I apologize to my colleagues and call upon Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In my opening statement, I quoted each one of you, and I think they are very strong quotes, particularly the one that "if ever the force is so degraded and so unready, and then we're asked to use it, it would be immoral." Then the statement, General Dempsey—actually I do not see it right now. Yes, Admiral. Then you add, "There could be for the first time in my career instances where we may be asked to respond to a crisis and we will have to say that we cannot." Then, of course, we saw that James Clapper said that there has never been a time in our history—and he has been

around for 40 years—when the threats are so great and diverse as they are today.

Do you agree with that?

General DEMPSEY. I do, Senator. There are probably fewer existential threats to the Nation, but there are far more ways that middle-weight states, non-state actors, and violent extremist groups can reach out and touch us.

Senator INHOFE. Do you agree with that, Admiral?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir. I would say that there are two definitions of a hollow force. One is the force is larger than the readiness money you have to keep it ready, and that is the more complex definition. The simple one is something that looks really good on the outside but it is rotten in the middle.

Senator INHOFE. Yes. Well, I was not talking about the hollow force. I was talking about the threats that are out there.

You know, I look back wistfully at the days of the Cold War. Things were predictable back then. Now you have entities out there like Iran that even our intelligence says they are going to have a weapon and the capability of a delivery system. That is what he is talking about. I think it is a scary thing.

The question I am going to ask you—you both believe that. Have you shared this with the President?

General DEMPSEY. Yes, we have briefed the President.

Senator INHOFE. So he knows this.

General DEMPSEY. Yes, sir.

Senator INHOFE. And yet, he continues with his approach.

Let me ask you a question about Gitmo. You said you would welcome any other solution. I have often looked at Gitmo as one of the few good deals we have in this country that we have had since 1904. What? \$4,000 a year I think it is, Mr. Chairman, and they do not collect it half the time. And yet, when you say, we welcome any other solution, what other solution? Is there a solution out there that would not entail bringing these people into our continental United States? Either one of you.

General DEMPSEY. I have seen the analysis done of any number of solutions, but there has not been any consensus on which one to pursue. I simply want to align myself with those who say we have to have a detention solution.

Senator INHOFE. Well, no, I agree. We have to have a detention. We have got something there that is ready-made. I understand that a lot of the people in the Middle East do not like it. It has maybe given us a bad reputation in some areas. But I believe that we need to think of America first.

I can recall 4 years ago when the President came out talking about these alternatives that they had. They had sites in the United States. One was in Oklahoma. I went down there and I talked to a young lady. She was in charge of our prison down there. She had had several tours in Gitmo, and she said what is the matter with them up there. Don't they know that we have this? It is ready-made.

I have to say this because this is a great frustration to me. Yes, we have language that is pretty good language in the bill, but nonetheless—well, I will just ask one last question on that.

Can you think of anything that would not entail incarceration or movement into the United States? Right now off the top of your head.

Admiral WINNEFELD. I do not have an easy answer to that one, Senator.

One thing I would mention is just a little more flexibility I think would be useful to us. And I will give you an example. We have a moral obligation to take good medical care of these detainees. Because we cannot move them outside of Gitmo, we have to build very, very state-of-the-art medical facilities—

Senator INHOFE. And I have seen it.

Admiral WINNEFELD. It would be great to be able to move them briefly back and forth to the United States if they need medical treatment and send them back. That is the kind of flexibility—

Senator INHOFE. Well, okay, that is fine.

Admiral WINNEFELD. I know that is different from what you are talking about.

Senator INHOFE. We have got that. There is not a person up here who has not been down there more than once. You know, one of the big problems they have with the detainees down there is overweight, and they are eating better than they have ever eaten in their lives. They have better medical attention. They have tests run that they never even heard of before. So I think we are meeting that.

On April 9th, when we stop the flying—I have talked to each one of you about this, but I think we need to get something on the record. I have an aviation background, and I do not think you have to have that to know that you have got to keep your proficiency up. That was 3 months ago, April 9th. Now, I applaud the decision to now get back in and start retraining.

I mentioned in my opening statement that I was going to conduct a study as to how much more it costs us to go through the retraining that we are going to have to go through right now than if we had never made the decision back on April 9th.

Have you already done that, or do you have any information in terms of how much more it is going to cost now than if we had not done it to start with?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I think it is a good question, and I think we can easily get that for you for the record in terms of cost.

What I can tell you is that if you take one of these squadrons that has not been flying at all, it is going to take anywhere from 1 to 3 months for them to bring their proficiency back up just in basic airmanship skills, taking off and landing and that sort of thing, and then probably another 3 months beyond that to get their combat skills back. So I think of it more in terms of time, but there is a cost dimension and we can get you that.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator INHOFE. Yes, but time, would you not agree, equals risk at the time we need these? We had some of them who came right out of school right around April 9th. They are going to go back and almost start from the beginning now. If we do not have the capability of taking care of the needs as they come up, I believe that

that translates into a risk that I am not willing to take if I can do anything about it.

General DEMPSEY. Senator, could I add?

Senator INHOFE. Sure.

General DEMPSEY. What we are seeing is that we are going to end up with two problems over time if sequestration remains in effect. The immediate problem for the next several years will be readiness because we will not be able to find the money we need to achieve the level of sequestration cuts without dramatically impacting our readiness. Then as the force becomes smaller, you can restore readiness because you are dealing with a smaller force, but I think too small. So it goes too far too fast.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, I understand that. The proficiency of a smaller number of units can be greater but you are still dealing with a smaller number of units. And when we have the diverse threats that we have right now, to me that is not a very good idea, not that you can do anything about it, but right now that is a problem.

The last question, because my time is up, would be, Admiral, I appreciate the fact that you used the word "immoral." And given the current path of readiness in the armed forces, in your professional judgment when will the commander in chief be at a point of making immoral decisions?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I do not think I was the one who used the term "immoral."

But I think we are keeping the White House closely informed as to the outcome of the Strategic Choices and Management Review. That includes both capability, capacity, and readiness of the force. They are aware of those results and I am sure that they are going to factor that into their decision-making on the rest of the budget issues that are in play. And hopefully, we will be able to find a good resolution that will allow us to go forward with being able to plan for the future.

Senator INHOFE. I appreciate both of you. We have to let the people know that we have a real serious problem here, and I think this hearing is our opportunity to do that.

And I apologize in attributing a quote to you. I guess it was General Dempsey who made that quote.

General DEMPSEY. Yes, it was, sir.

Let me assure you that if the Nation is threatened, we will go. But that is the point. We will go and we may not be ready to go. And so it would depend on the nature of the conflict in which we were asked to participate. If it is an existential threat to the Nation and we send them, there is no immorality in that. But if this were some other contingency and we were asking young men and women to go not ready and we had a choice to do that—

Senator INHOFE. That is where the immorality issue comes in.

General DEMPSEY. That is right.

Senator INHOFE. And I appreciate that very much and I agree with you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Blumenthal?

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I join in thanking both of you for your service over many, many years.

General Dempsey, you and I have discussed briefly the purchase of helicopters for the Afghan armed services, the purchase of Russian MI-17s from the export agency controlled by Russia that is now selling arms to Syria and a country that is still harboring, providing refuge to Edward Snowden. And we discussed the reasons for that sale. Very graciously, you suggested you would look into the possibility of either ending that sale, which will result in helicopters right now, according to the Inspector General for Afghanistan, sitting on the runways of Afghanistan because they lack pilots to fly them and they lack people trained to maintain or repair them.

I wonder whether there is something we can do either to stop those sales, purchases subsidized by American taxpayers, provided by American taxpayers to a supposed ally that still does not have a status of forces agreement with us that will enable us to continue providing aid to them. And I think in connection with that question, what additional kinds of resources we should consider stopping if there is no status of forces agreement.

General DEMPSEY. Senator, on the MI-17s, I support continuing on the path we are on to get the Afghans as capable as possible by the end of 2014, and that will require us to stay committed to that fleet of MI-17s. There is no way we could transition at this point and put them in anything other than that airframe.

What I suggested to you is that if we can achieve a lasting, enduring relationship with them and if they live up to their end of the deal and we live to our end of the deal, we will be investing in them through foreign military sales for some time. And there is a likely point where we could transition them to U.S.-built aircraft. But in the interim period, we cannot. I should not say we cannot. It would be my recommendation that we stay the course with the existing program.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And is that interest sufficient, do you think, to justify the National security waiver under the legislation that is currently included in the National Defense Authorization Act?

General DEMPSEY. I do, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And what would have to change for those helicopters to be purchased from an American manufacturer such as Sikorsky or any of the others that are more than capable of providing better aircraft to the Afghans?

General DEMPSEY. Well, we actually have experience in making that transition in Iraq where we have initially outfitted them with Soviet aircraft and are now making the transition to an American airframe. And it starts with training and long lead time procurements. But that effort is unlikely to begin until we establish a bilateral security agreement.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Admiral Winnefeld, I was at a briefing recently that you gave, an excellent briefing, on threats to our Navy. And I wonder if you could comment, to the extent you are able, on the importance of the *Ohio* class replacement in terms of nuclear deterrence, the importance of continuing with that program, and

any possible jeopardy that might be impacted as a result of sequester.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Senator, we of course remain committed to the triad. We believe that is the right approach for nuclear deterrence for this country, and of course, the fleet ballistic missile submarines are an absolutely essential element of that triad. It is the most survivable element that we have. It is a very reliable platform, a very reliable missile that goes with it. And so we are very committed to the next class coming down the line.

I think we have delayed it about as far as we can. We need to now—and we are getting into the requirements and design of this missile-carrying submarine. And again, we are just committed to the program. It is terribly important that we get this right.

We are going to try to control the costs on it. We are going to try to make this, like all the programs we are working right now, from the beginning a successful acquisition program. I know that the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics and Sean Stackley with the Navy and the CNO himself are all committed to making this a successful program.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And you would agree, would you not, that this program really has to be spared any impact as a result of sequester? It is so vital to our National security.

Admiral WINNEFELD. I would agree with that, yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. General Dempsey, I wonder if I could move to a personnel issue that I know, because of your personal commitment to the well-being of our troops, is of great interest to you, the electronic medical record system which still is incompatible—the Department of Defense medical records system with the VA record system—despite questions that I and others have asked repeatedly under this Secretary of Defense and the previous one. I remain concerned, to put it mildly, with the fact that interoperability still is a goal not a reality. And I wonder if you could comment on what can be done to increase the pace of making those two systems compatible. I had thought originally that they would be one system. A billion dollars has been spent on making them one system. And I ask you to comment.

General DEMPSEY. Thank you, sir.

I share your concern. I can also assure you that Secretary Hagel who, as you know, has a background in the Veterans Administration shares it. He has taken a decision to move the responsibility, the program management, into AT&L where it will, I think you will see, be much better managed.

We have done other things. For example, agreed to certify as complete medical records that pass from active duty into the Veterans Administration, which then relieves the burden of them having to do continual research to figure out if the record is complete.

That is the path we are on, but your oversight and interest in it will be an important part of achieving it.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

My time has expired. But I, again, want to thank you both for your extraordinary service and just to reiterate, General Dempsey, I remain unhappy, very strongly unhappy, with our current position and posture vis-a-vis those MI-17s and I am not going to let

the issue go. With all due respect, I understand your position. And thank you very much for being so forthright in your answers.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Blumenthal. Senator McCain?

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I must tell both the witnesses at the onset I am very concerned about the role you have played over the last 2 years, your view of your role as the chief advisors to the President on national security, and the state of the world over the last 2 years since you have been—hold the office you hold.

General Dempsey and Admiral Winnefeld, do you believe the continued costs and risks of our inaction in Syria are now worse for our National security interests than the costs and risks associated with limited military action?

General DEMPSEY. Senator, as we have discussed—

Senator MCCAIN. I would like to know an answer rather than a filibuster. I have 6 minutes and 10 seconds.

General DEMPSEY. I assure you, Senator, I will not filibuster.

This is a regional issue. So I would say that the issue in Syria is—we are at greater risk because of the emergence of violent extremist organizations, as is Iraq.

Senator MCCAIN. You are not answering the question, General. Do you believe the continued costs and risks of our inaction in Syria are now worse for our National security interests than the costs and risks associated with limited military action?

General DEMPSEY. With all due respect, Senator, you are asking me to agree that we have been inactive, and we have not been inactive.

Senator MCCAIN. We have not been inactive.

General DEMPSEY. That is correct.

Senator MCCAIN. This, again, gives validity to my concern because, obviously, we may not have been inactive, but any observer knows that Bashar al-Assad is prevailing on the battlefield. 100,000 people have been killed. Hezbollah is there. Russian—and the situation is much more dire than it was 2 years ago when you and Admiral Winnefeld came to office.

And so your answer is that we have not been inactive.

General DEMPSEY. That is correct. We have not used direct military strengths, but we have not been inactive.

Senator MCCAIN. I will ask you for the third time. Do you believe that we should take military action? Which has greater risk? Our continued, limited action or significant action such as the establishment of a no-fly zone and arming the rebels with the weapons they need, which they have not been getting, General, I know. I know perhaps better than you because I have been there. Which do you think is a greater cost? The action that we are taking now, which has had no effect on the battlefield equation, or doing nothing?

General DEMPSEY. Senator, I am in favor of building a moderate opposition and supporting it. The question of whether to support it with direct kinetic strikes is a decision for our elected officials, not for the senior military leader of the Nation.

Senator MCCAIN. This goes back to my concern about your role as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

General DEMPSEY. I understand.

Senator MCCAIN. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is supposed to provide the best advice he can as far as our overall national security is concerned. That is why you are the sole military advisor.

You testified this February you had advised the President to arm vetted units of the Syrian opposition. In April, you testified you no longer supported the position. Now we read in published reports that the administration has decided to arm the Syrian opposition units.

How do we account for those pirouettes?

General DEMPSEY. I would not accept the term "pirouette," sir. I would accept the term that we have adapted our approach based on what we know of the opposition. And if you recall, in the beginning of the year there was a period where it was pretty evident that the extremist groups were prevailing inside the opposition. So I have not been wavering—

Senator MCCAIN. Is your position that the extremist groups are prevailing inside the opposition?

General DEMPSEY. You asked me about February. In February I had that concern.

Senator MCCAIN. So that is your answer to why in February you advised the President to arm them. In April you said that we should not, and then now, obviously, we are arming the rebels. Do you support that policy?

General DEMPSEY. I support the building of a moderate opposition and including building its military capability.

Senator MCCAIN. Here is an example of my concern. Quote. You told CNN on July 8th the war in Syria is not a simple matter of stopping the fight by the introduction of any particular U.S. capability. Quote. It seems to me that we need to understand what the peace will look like before we start the war. The war has been going on, General Dempsey, to over 100,000 people killed. We did not start the war and we would not be starting a war. We would be trying to stop a massacre that is going on. We would try to stop the Hezbollah with thousands of troops. We would try to stop the fact that the Russians continue to supply heavily Bashar al Assad's forces and what would be a great triumph for Iran in the entire region. But you say it seems to me we need to understand what the peace will look like before we start the war. Do you think we ought to see how we could stop the war by intervening and stopping the massacre?

General DEMPSEY. Senator, would you agree that we have recent experience where until we understood how the country would continue to govern and that institutions of governance would not fail, that actually situations can be made worse by the introduction of military force?

Senator MCCAIN. Actually, General Dempsey, you and I went through this in 2006 when I said that it was not succeeding and that we had to have a surge and that only a surge could succeed in reversing the tide of battle. And you disagreed with me then way back then. And I think history shows that those of us who supported the surge were right and people like you who did not think we needed a surge were wrong.

So I guess my question to you is, is it in any way a good outcome for this situation on the battlefield to continue as it is with obviously Bashar al-Assad prevailing and a great victory for Iran and continued slaughter of thousands and thousands of people, the destabilization of Jordan, the destabilization of Lebanon, and what is clearly erupting into a regional conflict? Is that your answer?

General DEMPSEY. Senator, somehow you have got me portrayed as the one who is holding back from our use of military force inside of Syria.

Senator MCCAIN. No, I am not saying that, General. I am saying what your advice and counsel is to the President of the United States, and your views are very important because that is your job.

General DEMPSEY. It is. And I have given those views to the President. We have given him options. Members of this committee have been briefed on them in a classified setting. We have articulated the risks. The decision on whether to use force is the decision of our elected officials.

Senator MCCAIN. You know, the chairman just asked you if you would give your personal opinion to the committee if asked. You said yes. I am asking for your opinion.

General DEMPSEY. About the use of kinetic strikes? That issue is under deliberation inside of our agencies of Government, and it would be inappropriate for me to try to influence the decision with me rendering an opinion in public about what kind of force we should use.

Senator MCCAIN. So your answer to the chairman's question about giving your personal view is circumscribed by decisions that are still being made.

General DEMPSEY. I will render my—let this committee know what my recommendations are at the appropriate time. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. And when might that be?

General DEMPSEY. Sir, if the administration and the Government decides to use military force, we have provided a variety of options, and you know that.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, if it is your position that you do not provide your personal views to the committee when asked, only under certain circumstances, then you have just contradicted what I have known this committee to operate under for the last 30 years.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Senator Donnelly?

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, General. Thank you, Admiral.

And I want to get back to Syria in a second.

But, first, I want to ask you, General Dempsey. In regards to mental health services for our service members, one of the things that has recently happened is that at Camp Lejeune, they were reduced by about 50 appointments per month because of the sequestration. And I was wondering if you know if there has been any increase in suicide or suicide attempts since sequestration took effect.

General DEMPSEY. I do not have that data readily available, Senator. It is a good question. We are aware of some of the reduction in services. And I can take that for the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator DONNELLY. Okay, great.

And then the follow-up on that would be, are there efforts in place right now to try to minimize the effect on mental health since it has such a dramatic effect on our service members?

General DEMPSEY. There are any number of efforts, and it has got the attention of not only the Department but also the Joint Chiefs. Admiral Winnefeld himself chairs a meeting with the vice chiefs of services. We meet in the tank. We are concerned because although we have prioritized care for wounded warriors, families, and mental health services in the face of declining resources, how that is implemented in the field can sometimes be missed. And so we are alert to it.

Senator DONNELLY. Okay.

I was in Afghanistan a few months ago and met with our commanders. And at the time, we were on all of our metrics. Everything was being—we were right where we wanted to be as we head toward the end of 2014. Admiral and General, are we still meeting the plan that we had laid out? Are we still being able to hold the towns that we have started to hold? Are we able to turn the Taliban back? Is the plan moving along on schedule? Is it going faster or lesser? Are we meeting the numbers we were hoping to meet as we head toward the end of 2014?

General DEMPSEY. I will start and see if the Vice wants to add.

Besides speaking with General Dunford on a weekly basis and visiting him about quarterly, I also reach out to as many other people as I can possibly reach out to who can give us other views. And so yesterday we had a woman from the Congressional Research Service who had actually spent the last 5 months traveling around Afghanistan visiting with civilian and military leaders, mostly Afghans. And her report aligned with General Dunford's assessment that we can achieve our military campaign objectives on the timeline that is currently established.

Senator DONNELLY. I appreciate the update because if we are able to stay on that program, then the Afghan forces have a chance to make this work.

To get back to Syria that Senator McCain was talking about, if conditions do not change, does it look to you, as it looks to many, that in the near future Daraa could also fall to the Assad government as well?

General DEMPSEY. Well, actually the chairman asked—

Senator DONNELLY. And I apologize. I had to step out.

General DEMPSEY. No, no, sir. I was just reflecting on the fact that there are many people concerned about Daraa. I met on Saturday with King Abdullah from Jordan, and I will be visiting him next week and his leaders as well. We have got military contingency planning ongoing both back here, but also inside Jordan. So, yes, we are concerned about Daraa.

The conflict tends to ebb and flow. That kind of conflict will always ebb and flow. And so we are watching and making sure that we would have options available to the National command authority if necessary.

Senator DONNELLY. Well, what steps, short of a limited no-fly zone, could have the kind of effect that could slow down the Assad forces?

General DEMPSEY. Let me pass that to the Vice because he just did some significant work on this in preparation for his hearing on Tuesday.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Senator, there are a whole range of options that are out there.

Senator DONNELLY. And the reason I asked that is because I know there is a whole range of options, but as you look at everything, the rebel forces are being moved from almost everywhere they are located. And so we have options but the ball seems to be heading the other way.

Admiral WINNEFELD. I would not want to get into any intelligence community judgments or anything classified in an unclassified hearing. But I think as commonly known, where the opposition is most on the run right now is in the central and western part of Syria around Al-Qusayr, which they have lost, around Homs, which is a very difficult situation for them right now. And that also happens to be the most important place other than Damascus itself probably for the Syrian regime to regain control of because that represents the pathway from Damascus into their traditional homeland near the coast. So they really want that back.

I believe personally—and it is only my personal judgment—that if the regime is successful in that area, they will next move north to Aleppo, which is the largest city in Syria. It is their commercial center. I do not think they are going to go down to Daraa yet, but we have got to watch. We have got to maintain vigilance and discern where this thing is headed.

Senator DONNELLY. And then whether it is Aleppo or Daraa, the old saying—and I know there are contingencies. But to not take action is to take action and is determinative of what happens. So I think there is a concern as to how long does this go on before the momentum becomes irreversible.

Admiral WINNEFELD. We are ready to act if we are called upon to act. I think the current track that is being pursued by the administration is a diplomatic track. And all manner of other options have been discussed and are continually under discussion, and I would not want to get out in front of the President or anybody else on what choices he might make.

Senator DONNELLY. So, in effect, you are waiting to hear at this point.

Admiral WINNEFELD. As we should be. We are ready, providing every possible option we can in case we are called upon to exercise the use of force, which we believe is a political decision.

Senator DONNELLY. In regards to the rebel forces, as you look at them right now, General and Admiral, we have been concerned about al-Nusra and their activities. Do you see the al-Nusra piece growing stronger than the moderate piece? How do you see this moving on a day-to-day basis?

General DEMPSEY. There was a period back in April that Senator McCain referred where I was very concerned that the al-Nusra front, Ahrar al-Sham, and others—there are hundreds of different groups that shift allegiances and alliances on the opposition side,

and it makes it very challenging to determine what we are really looking at there. The intel community is hard at it. I am hard at it. We are hard at it with our regional partners. So there was a period of time when I was fearful that the extremist element, the jihadist Salafist side of the opposition was gaining considerable strength.

Of late, through some efforts that we have made to convince our allies to avoid creating a problem by empowering some of these groups, we have had some success at that. We have also had some success in identifying more clearly a part of the opposition that could be built and trained not only militarily. This is the point I really want to make sure resonates. This opposition has to not only be prepared militarily, but it has to be prepared if it achieves a position of governance inside of Syria. Otherwise, the situation will deteriorate even further.

Senator DONNELLY. General, Admiral, thank you for your service. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Donnelly.

Now, before I call on Senator Wicker, Senator Inhofe has a very brief comment.

Senator INHOFE. Just a brief clarification. I was told by my staff when I came back that I might have been misunderstood in my comments about Gitmo. I am probably, arguably the strongest supporter of opening it up, using it to its fullest capacity not just for incarceration but for trials. And the language is in the bill. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your good faith efforts in the language that was in there, but I am against the language that is in the NDAA.

And thank you for giving me the opportunity to state that.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Wicker?

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Dempsey, welcome back.

Let us talk about the situation in Egypt. There has been disagreement in Washington about the wisdom of continuing to provide assistance to the Egyptian military in light of recent events there. When I look at Egypt, I do not see very many Jeffersonian Democrats, but I believe the Egyptian military has acted with great professionalism and restraint throughout the 3 years of difficult transition since the 2011 ouster of Hosni Mubarak.

I believe one of the primary reasons there has not been far more bloodshed and suffering during this time of transition is the support the United States has provided to Egypt through foreign military sales and military-to-military cooperation.

In light of recent events, some have called for the end of these programs. Let me tell you how I feel about this and our commitments under the Camp David Accords and then let you respond.

First, we must maintain the strength of this relationship to enable us to assist and influence Egypt's military leaders.

Second, the United States would be short-sighted to overlook the return on investment we get from the Egyptian military, for example, Suez Canal transits for our carrier battle groups, intelligence cooperation, counterterrorism cooperation. These are examples of the benefits we derive from this relationship.

Third, the Egyptian military has played a stabilizing role during Egypt's transition.

And fourth, our commitments under the Camp David Accords have yielded sustainable peace between Israel and Egypt. We must acknowledge Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's statement this weekend on Face the Nation that the Camp David Accords have been, quote, the cornerstone of peace between us and our neighbors, and it has also been the cornerstone of stability in the Middle East. Unquote.

General Dempsey, do you agree with me regarding the importance of military-to-military relationships as enablers of U.S. foreign policy?

General DEMPSEY. I do, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Do you agree with me that we should continue to maintain and foster the strength of the U.S.-Egyptian military relationship?

General DEMPSEY. I do. If our Government decides that they have to take some action based on existing legal frameworks and restrictions, I would recommend that we find a way to restore those as quickly as possible even if it meant conditioning them some way. But I very strongly believe we have to maintain our contact with the Egyptian armed forces.

Senator WICKER. And do you have any reason to believe, as some have feared and as some fear now, that weapons and equipment that we provide to the Egyptians or that we have provided in the past have been used or will be used or would be used in ways that might eventually endanger the United States military or civilian personnel or United States interests?

General DEMPSEY. There is no indication at this point, Senator, that that would be a concern.

Senator WICKER. In your opinion, was the elected Government of Mohamed Morsi moving toward a dictatorship?

General DEMPSEY. If I could, I would like to use this opportunity to express my conversations with my counterpart. I can tell you they very strongly believe that.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Well, let me just ask you then, before I move on to another topic. I made some pretty emphatic statements. Would you like to elaborate? I will give you an opportunity to elaborate on what you have said about the relationship that we have had and the assistance and the sales that we have had with the Egyptian military.

General DEMPSEY. Thank you. My own personal experience with it goes back to when I commanded CENTCOM in 2008, and I can tell you that they are a very strong partner of the United States, a very key nation in the region. As you put it yourself, we enjoy preferential passage in the Suez, dynamic overflight. They have committed to the Camp David Accords. The Israeli military considers the Egyptian military a strong partner. So in my personal experience, which goes back now about 5 years, they are worth the investment.

Senator WICKER. Now, with regard to then to Syria, the chairman talked in his opening statement about a post-Assad solution, the negotiated solution. Do you agree that unless the momentum shifts—and I think Senator Donnelly was concerned about this

also—back toward the rebels, there is hardly any chance for that sort of solution that the chairman seeks and is hoping for?

General DEMPSEY. Yes, I agree. I think as the momentum ebbs and flows, each side feels itself more compelled or less compelled to seek a negotiated settlement. Sure.

Senator WICKER. So if I can, I think you answered a question from the chairman about ways in which military support could be gotten to the rebels, and I think he asked about enabling other governments to support the military efforts if we are unable politically or unwilling to do so. Do you remember that question?

General DEMPSEY. I do.

Senator WICKER. Can you elaborate at all, or is that something you just do not feel comfortable talking about?

General DEMPSEY. No. I am comfortable talking about the commitment to improve the capabilities of the opposition. And there are any number of ways to do it directly.

Senator WICKER. The military capability.

General DEMPSEY. That is correct.

But you have also heard me say it is not just about improving or enhancing their military capability.

Senator WICKER. I understand that, but that is what my question is about.

General DEMPSEY. Yes, sir.

And, of course, other nations as well. And there is a significant diplomatic effort to bundle our efforts together into something that will increase the pace at which their capability could be increased.

Senator WICKER. Could you elaborate as to who these allies might be that are a little more willing?

General DEMPSEY. I would rather do that in a classified setting, Senator.

Senator WICKER. Okay.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Senator Reed is going to yield momentarily to another Senator who is next in line who I believe is Senator Gillibrand. Senator Reed is going to yield just for one turn.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for your public service, for your dedication, for all that you do for our military and for our Nation.

I would like to first focus and continue the conversation on Syria.

I have grave concerns over the broader regional security in the Middle East, particularly when we are seeing the continued influx of jihadi and Hezbollah fighters into Syria. So I want to talk a little bit about what this means for Syria's neighbor.

Obviously, Hezbollah in Lebanon—Iran has been able to have an influence at Israel's border. Will Iran be able to do the same with regard to Syria in your estimation? And what can we do to prevent both a jihadi haven, as well as a stronghold for Iran through Hezbollah in Syria?

General DEMPSEY. I will take this and then if the Vice Chairman wants to add because we have been—it will not surprise you to know—deeply involved in this issue collaboratively.

So, first of all, you are exactly right to think of this as a regional issue, Senator. And I would add that Iran is not just a challenge to the United States in its nuclear aspirations but also through its surrogates, its proxies, its arm sales. And they are trying to foment a sectarian conflict that runs from Beirut to Damascus to Baghdad. The approach to that, the strategy that would underpin our efforts should be regional, therefore, which means we need to increase our support of the Lebanese armed forces on one side, of the Iraqi armed forces on the other, and of our Jordanian and Turkish partners on the northern and southern flank.

Senator GILLIBRAND. With regard to the broader question on Iran specifically, I have heard both cautious optimism and grave concern about the election of Rohani as the new President. What is your assessment of the impact of the election? Do you expect his election to change Iran's nuclear policy or its international policies? What is your initial assessment?

Admiral WINNEFELD. First of all, I reflect back on former Secretary Gates' oft-quoted remark of he is looking for the elusive Iranian moderate. Rohani does have a reputation for being a moderate. He has made some moderate statements since he has been elected, but he is not in office yet. There are those of us who have the opinion he is going to struggle a little bit against a very, very conservative central government leadership led by the Supreme Leader that may prevent him from, if he wants to be a moderate, becoming one.

So I think the real watchword here is prudence. It makes sense to potentially reach out to him, see where he is coming from, but not to do so naively. And I do not think anybody is going to do that. I think we are in a good position here. But it is an interesting development. Nobody really expected him to be elected, at the same time again the elusive Iranian moderate. We need to maintain the pressure that we are maintaining on the regime and make it very clear to them what our objectives are, number one, that they not develop a nuclear weapon.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Turning now to cyber, both of you have testified that you believe that cyber is a growing threat and a serious concern for our military and for our National security and for our economy. We have been working on a bipartisan basis on a bill called The Cyber Warrior Act—Senator Vitter and Senator Blunt are leading the charge for the Republican side—in order to create a National Guard unit that is dedicated solely to cyber defense of our Nation as a way to get some of our best and bravest from the private sector who are dedicated to the military and the defense of this country to be able to use their talents more efficiently, in a more cost efficient manner as well.

Can I have your opinions on what the impact of creating these units would be with their dual status and whether that would be in the end better for our defense and for growing this talent in house?

General DEMPSEY. Well, I will go first. Again, this is one where the Vice has also been deeply involved.

First of all, you have our commitment to seek to figure out what are the various roles in all the components of our military and all

the branches of service. Without making a firm commitment right now on that particular approach, I will say that each of the service chiefs is taking a look at it under the advice of our Cyber commander and Strat commander.

By the way, you say it is a growing concern. It is here right now. And so there is urgency to this and I think you understand that.

We would have to understand what the cyber role would be for a guardsman. There really would be no role in a Title 2 authority. There is no Title 2 authority for cyber. So it is really title 10.

But go ahead, Sandy.

Admiral WINNEFELD. I would say it has been an interesting idea that we have looked at and we are committed to looking at. We are growing our cyber force by a considerable number. It is probably the only part of our force that is going to grow under current budget conditions.

We need this new force to do a number of things for us, principally to help us defend our own networks inside the Department of Defense to help defend the Nation against cyber attacks. Obviously, law enforcement, Department of Homeland Security have the lead there, but we play an important role in assisting them.

And then there is the potential for offensive cyber operations in support of a combatant commander if we end up finding ourselves in a war.

Where the National Guard fits into those three niches is something we need to study and look at. We are short of money. It is going to cost a lot to develop this capability in the Guard, and it is not there all the time for us. Then again, I think you make a fair point that there is expertise out there to tap on.

Senator GILLIBRAND. That we want to have.

Admiral WINNEFELD. So I just think we need to look very closely, very soberly at whether this makes sense financially and—

Senator GILLIBRAND. Well, I would like to work with you both on this issue.

We have, obviously, been spending a lot of time on sexual assault in the military. It is something everyone cares deeply about solving. One of the things I want to get your thoughts on—obviously, the military has had a change of position on its view towards article 60, that we can actually take article 60 authority outside the chain of command and still maintain good order and discipline, still maintain command climate command control.

Why do you think removing article 30 would be different in any way? Because I would imagine that second legal decision would not have a differing impact than removing article 60.

General DEMPSEY. The approach to article 60 was because we had put in place over time in our judicial system other mechanisms, military judges and prosecutors, and an appeal process that allowed us to consider changing the authorities of a convening authority to change a ruling after the fact. But that is, it seems to us, different than taking the actual offense out of the UCMJ.

Do you want to add anything to that?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I think the most important thing to me is to make sure that there is an active deterrent out there that somebody who is contemplating sexual assault knows that they are going to be caught, that they are going to be prosecuted, and if they

are prosecuted, they are going to be punished. It is the same thing that has worked in the drug world for us and the like. And so, as you know, it is our strong view that the commander is responsible for that.

Senator GILLIBRAND. But I would argue that the commander is still responsible for that because keeping in a number of the articles like article 134, other articles that are general crimes, you are still fundamentally responsible for command climate, good order and discipline. For any type of infraction of any part of the UCMJ, the commander is responsible for. So you have to set the climate where this assault and rape is not going to happen—

Admiral WINNEFELD. I could not agree more.

Senator GILLIBRAND.—where they can not be retaliated against and where they will report.

The only difference is the legal judgment, that weighing of evidence and facts, will now be done by a trained objective military prosecutor.

Admiral WINNEFELD. I would like to give you a couple of numbers on what the Army has discovered recently, peeling back the numbers on what a so-called objective observer might end up with.

The Army has looked back over the last 2 years and has found 35 cases where a civilian district attorney refused to take a sexual assault case—refused to take the case. And the chain of command in the military insisted that the case be taken inside the military chain of command. Of those 35 cases, there are 14 out there that are not yet resolved. They are still in the court system. Of the remainder, of the 25—of the 35 that are complete—I am sorry. There are actually 49. Of the 35 complete, 25 resulted in a court martial conviction. That is a 71 percent conviction rate. The civilian rate is around 18 to 22 percent. So of those 71 percent that were convicted, 24 of the 25 got punitive discharges. They are doing prison time.

So if the Army had not taken those 49 cases and the 35 where we have achieved a conviction, those people would be walking the street right now. The victims would not have had the resolution that they deserved in this case. This was done inside the chain of command, the chain of command insisting that a prosecution be pursued, and it was pursued successfully. I worry that if we turn this over to somebody else, whether it is a civilian DA or a non-entity in the military, that they are going to make the same kind of decisions that those civilian prosecutors made. So I worry that we are going to have fewer prosecutions if we take it outside the chain of command.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Well, we want prosecutions that are going to result in guilty verdicts, and weighing these kinds of evidence is very difficult. And that is why being trained to know what kind of cases you can bring forward and win is so important.

But, moreover, you may have helped a handful of victims. We are still having 23,000 victims who do not feel the system is strong enough, objective enough, and transparent enough to even report. So if we are going to address the 23,000 cases as opposed to the handful where a judgment of a commander might have helped, we need to change the system.

But my time has expired.

General DEMPSEY. And by the way, thanks, Senator. I hope you know we actually embrace this discussion.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you for your service and thoughtfulness.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

Senator Ayotte?

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank both of you for being here and your families for your distinguished service to our country.

And, General Dempsey, I want to thank you for your recent visit to New Hampshire. It really meant a lot to our men and women in uniform, and they said to me after that it really said so much about your leadership to go hear from those on the ground. And also at our shipyard, our civilian workforce—they deeply appreciated it. So thank you.

I wanted to ask you. Yesterday I was deeply troubled by a report that came out from GAO about the POW/MIA Accounting Command, and that report actually said that unfortunately the leadership weaknesses and fragmented organizational structure is undermining the important function of JPAC. And of course, with more than 83,000 of our country's heroes remaining missing or unaccounted for from past conflicts, including 49 from New Hampshire for Vietnam and Korea, I believe we have a moral obligation to those we have left behind.

And this follows up a recent AP report that found that an internal study that was done at DOD found that this effort, JPAC, was so inept, mismanaged, and wasteful that it risked descending from dysfunction to total failure. And there were allegations that this internal study had been suppressed by DOD.

So I would like to ask you, General Dempsey, what are we going to do about this and how are we going to make sure that we fulfill our responsibility to those who have served our country and have been left behind so that they understand that they are not forgotten?

General DEMPSEY. First, Senator, thanks for the hospitality last week. And I assure you I always get more than I give on those visits to soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, coast guardsmen, and all the components.

Well, this is a new report to us as well. I can tell you, though, that the Secretary of Defense, while on travel, called me up to make sure that I had been made aware of it and to tell me that when he got back and when I complete this process of hearings and office calls, that he wants to get to the bottom of it.

So I mean, it is so new, but it is so discouraging and moving rapidly toward disgraceful. So I assure you we will get at it.

Now, we got a new commander out there, and I can also tell you that he is seized with this as well.

Senator AYOTTE. I have written the chairman and I hope that we could have, whether in the committee or in the larger—with the full committee, a hearing on this because I believe it is that important to get to the bottom of some of the issues that have been raised by this GAO report and the internal report.

I would like to ask you, Chairman, the chairman and the ranking member of this committee wrote to Secretary Hagel on May 2nd of

2013. And we have heard testimony both in the Readiness Subcommittee and every subcommittee within this committee about the impacts of sequestration. And in that letter, the chairman asked you to produce or the Department of Defense to produce a package of reductions for the fiscal year 2014 defense budget that would be the most workable approach for meeting the \$52 billion in reductions required by sequestration under the Budget Control Act.

We did receive a response recently from Secretary Hagel, but it does not really answer our question on the specifics.

Have you put together a contingency plan for the \$52 billion in reductions required by sequestration in the year 2014?

General DEMPSEY. The Services, having received their fiscal guidance about 2 weeks ago, are preparing that contingency right now. And it will be a contingency that addresses both the President's budget submission and also the sequestration.

Senator AYOTTE. We had asked for this in July. Can you give me a commitment as to when will this be produced to us, this committee, so that we can understand the impacts of sequestration and we can also share it with our colleagues about what it really means in terms of the impact of the readiness of our forces?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I can probably help.

General DEMPSEY. Yes, go ahead.

Admiral WINNEFELD. It is a very fair question. The answer that came back was the first contours of what the fiscal year 2014 execution would look like under those conditions.

It is important for us to kind of keep in mind that there are about five things the service planners, budget planners, are having to go through right now. They are going through what 2014 is going to look like under the conditions that were asked for in the letter. They are finalizing what 2014 execution would look like under the President's budget. They are also having to develop two or three different scenarios for the fiscal year 2015 to 2019 budget. And these people are furloughed 1 day a week. So it is a little tough to produce fine detail of that quickly. But the services have been given the task and they will have an execution plan before the first of October and you will have it.

Senator AYOTTE. We need it sooner. And let me just say that you can do all the planning you want for the President's budget, but it is pie in the sky right now. The reality is that the law is the sequestration, and until the American people understand and everyone here understands what the real impact of that is, that is why I am hoping that you will make that the priority.

And I know I do not have that much time, but I want to ask you, Chairman and the Vice Chairman, about Russia. And in particular, I saw a recent report that Russia is in violation of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Is that true?

Admiral WINNEFELD. That is something that we cannot address in an unclassified hearing, but I would be happy to get into a discussion with you in a more classified setting, the point being that we have very good verification methods in place. We watch this very closely. We believe that they are in compliance with the START treaty, and I need to leave it at that in this setting.

Senator AYOTTE. Okay. I will follow up because I am not asking about the START treaty.

Admiral WINNEFELD. I understand.

Senator AYOTTE. And the reason that I am asking this is because here is where we are with Russia, a postmortem conviction of Sergei Magnitsky—the human rights—who was, of course, tortured and killed for bringing out corruption within the government. To put it in your face with the United States, they have not ruled out granting asylum to Edward Snowden. And just today there was a report that one of Putin's chief opponents, Navalny, a candidate for the mayor of Moscow, was convicted. And it really reeks of using the judicial system for Putin to punish his opponents.

And so when I look at that context, one thing that concerns me is that our posture with Russia—if they are in violation of their treaty obligations, that is an important issue.

One final question, Admiral. The President recently announced that he would be considering further reductions to our nuclear arsenal. Do you believe that we should do that unilaterally?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Senator, the advice that we have given to the President is that we not do that unilaterally, that we do it as part of a negotiated package of reductions.

Senator AYOTTE. If there were going to be unilateral reductions, would you oppose those reductions?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I would not give that advice to the President that we do a unilateral reduction.

Senator AYOTTE. So you would advise against a unilateral reduction in our nuclear deterrent.

Admiral WINNEFELD. We already have.

Senator AYOTTE. Okay. I appreciate that.

General DEMPSEY. And there are three things, Senator. There is the through negotiations, preserve the triad, and modernize the stockpile.

Senator AYOTTE. My time is up, but I think given the behavior of Russia, I think it is at best naïve to think that we are going to be able to negotiate any kind of further reductions, which I would oppose. I do not think that is the right direction for the protection of this country. But in light of what I just described—and obviously, we cannot discuss it in this setting, but if we find out that they are in violation of other treaty obligations, coupled with their other behavior, I do not see how we can expect good faith negotiations from the Russians at the moment.

Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

Senator Reed?

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, gentlemen, for your service to the Nation and to your families? service because it is evident you cannot do this alone.

General Dempsey, one of your statutory duties is to provide your formal military advice on the strategic environment and military activities needed to address that environment through the Chairman's risk assessment. And given the current world environment, which seems to be changing minute by minute—Senator Ayotte just detailed what has happened in the last 24 hours with respect

to the Russians—what changes would you make today to your risk assessment that you submitted in April?

General DEMPSEY. Thanks, Senator.

The first thing I think you have probably noticed is we changed the one we submitted in April. Previously it had been an accumulation of combatant commander requirements.

And by the way, this is to Senator Inhofe's point earlier. Since I have been Chairman over the past 2 years, the requirements that the combatant commanders have submitted have actually increased in PACOM, in CENTCOM, and in AFRICOM notably. So it is to the point about increasing risk, declining readiness.

And we changed it to try to align what we are doing with national security interests unprioritized, because that is not our responsibility to prioritize them, and we made an estimate of what we are doing across the globe that is being placed at risk. And we also looked inside the services at how the health of the force is evolving.

In that document, I made mention of the fact that this document did not account for sequestration, and that once that became a reality, that I would have to revise my risk assessment. I will have to do so to align with the submission that Senator Ayotte just described.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Winnefeld, my colleagues, particularly Senator Gillibrand, have done extraordinary service to the Nation and to the military by pointing out that despite years of effort, we have a significant sexual abuse problem in the military. And we have to, as you both clearly indicated, not rhetorically but fundamentally respond to this.

One aspect we focused on has been the judicial system. But some of my experience suggests that there are other levers that are critical to the climate, the command structure, the performance of the military, and they include evaluation, promotion, and retention. And that if we do not focus on those areas also, then we will never have the kind of force that we need and the trust that we need among the men and women who serve in that force.

Can you comment on that? I know you and your colleagues have taken on sort a leadership role in dealing with this issue.

Admiral WINNEFELD. In terms of promotion and—

Senator REED. How do we make this so that every day someone thinks about their responsibilities. You know, there is a judicial process out there, but this is how I am going to—this is what is expected of me to stay in the force, to succeed in the force, and to have the force succeed.

Admiral WINNEFELD. There are an enormous number of aspects of that answer, but I will touch on a few.

The most important thing—and Senator Gillibrand touched on this—is the command climate that we hold commanders responsible for establishing that makes the likelihood of a sexual assault drop down hopefully to zero. And there are a number of aspects. It is about teaching people what a heinous crime this is. It is about reporting it if you see it. It is about intervening if you see it about to happen, a whole host of measures that commanders must take to establish the climate inside their commands. And we need to

hold commanders accountable for establishing that climate, and we intend to. That is one of the reasons why the command climate surveys now are going to be seen, which we normally have not done, by the next echelon up in the chain of command. And if that next echelon up detects a problem that the climate is not where it needs to be, then action can be taken and it can be even entered into somebody's evaluation as sort of a down strike, as you will.

So in keeping with the prevention and the advocacy, investigation, accountability, and assessment pieces of what we are trying to do to take on this pernicious issue, it is absolutely vital that the climate piece of it come to the forefront and that we hold commanders responsible for that.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

General Dempsey, can you comment on the current level of cooperation between the Government of Kabul and NATO ISAF command? Every day there seems to be another example of friction rather than harmony.

General DEMPSEY. The relationship with notably the President of Afghanistan is "scratchy" I think is probably as good a word as I could describe it. He is addressing what he describes as issues of sovereignty, and we are trying to close the gap on what an enduring presence and commitment might look like.

Senator REED. Thank you.

And, Admiral Winnefeld, in terms of the recent discovery of contraband coming out of Cuba to North Korea, do you have kind of a rough assessment at this juncture? Was it the Cubans trying simply to rehabilitate their equipment, or were they trying to get equipment to North Korea so the North Koreans could use it?

Admiral WINNEFELD. It is a little hard to tell at this point. The intelligence community is still evaluating that. It would be easy to come to the conclusion that under the guise of returning equipment to North Korea for repair, that in fact these are jet engines and missiles that would be going to North Korea to replenish their stocks or what have you.

In either case, it clearly exposes North Korea's willing defiance of the international community and United Nations Security Council's resolution and the like. We are very glad that the Panamanians discovered this so that we can once more expose to the world the cynical behavior of the North Korean regime.

Senator REED. Thank you. Thank you, General.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Graham?

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for your service.

Chairman Dempsey, the Russian president said I think a couple of days ago that if he thought hurting U.S.-Russian relationships would be a consequence of granting Snowden asylum, he would not do it. What would your advice be to the Russian president about granting Snowden asylum?

General DEMPSEY. I think that there would be consequences across all of our relationships, military, economic—

Senator GRAHAM. It would be damaging and not do it. Would that be your advice?

General DEMPSEY. I think it would be, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay, thank you very much.

The prime minister of Israel was on national television on Face the Nation Sunday, and he said the following things about Iran. There is a new president in Iran. He believes he is criticizing his predecessor for being a wolf in wolf's clothing. His strategy is be a wolf in sheep's clothing, smile, and build a bomb.

Admiral Winnefeld, do you agree with that analysis?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Well, as I mentioned earlier, I certainly would agree that we are for the elusive—

Senator GRAHAM. Is there any doubt in your mind that this guy is actually a moderate?

Admiral WINNEFELD. We are looking for the elusive Iranian moderate—

Senator GRAHAM. Now, my question to you—and this will determine how I vote for you. Do you believe the current president of Iran is a moderate?

Admiral WINNEFELD. He does not have a history of being a moderate, no, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I will take that as no.

The United States should ratchet up the sanctions and make it clear to Iran that they will not get away with it, and if sanctions do not work, then they have to know that you will be prepared—us, the United States—to take military action. That is the only thing that will get their attention. Do you agree with the Israeli prime minister about the threat of military force against the Iranian nuclear program may be the only thing to get their attention, General Dempsey?

General DEMPSEY. That has been our approach all along, sir. So yes.

Senator GRAHAM. So great. So we are all on the same sheet of paper there, that if they do not believe we are going to hit them, they are going to move.

Here is what he said about all the problems in the Mideast summed up this way. All the problems that we have, however important, will be dwarfed by this messianistic, apocalyptic, extreme regime that would have an atomic bomb. It would make a terrible, a catastrophic change for the world and for the United States.

Do you agree with his assessment of how important it is not to allow the Iranians to get a nuclear weapon?

General DEMPSEY. I do and that is what we have said.

Senator GRAHAM. Great.

All right. Now, as to Afghanistan, the current commander suggested that a 12,000-member force, two-thirds being United States, the other 4,000 being NATO, not counting American special forces troops soft capability, would be a reasonable number to leave behind in terms of a follow-on force. Does that make sense to you? Is he in the ball park? Does that make sense?

General DEMPSEY. He is and we have said so at NATO in various sessions.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you very much. That is encouraging.

Do you agree with me that it would be a wise investment to keep the Afghan army at 352,000 at least for a few more years rather than draw them down to 232,000?

General DEMPSEY. I do.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Syria. Is Assad winning?

General DEMPSEY. Currently the tide seems to have shifted in his favor.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with that, Admiral Winnefeld?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I would say specifically the tide has shifted in his favor in the central and western part of the country. It is very fragile in the north, and they are hanging in there.

Senator GRAHAM. Is he winning overall or not?

Admiral WINNEFELD. If I were to have to pick who is winning, it would be the regime, but not by much right now.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. All right. So the regime is winning but not by much.

Could they be winning without Russia's help?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I think the most important help they are getting, sir, is Iranian and Hezbollah. So I do not know whether Russia's help is vital but it is certainly helping them.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, General Dempsey, how would you evaluate the significance of Russia's help to Assad?

General DEMPSEY. Through their foreign military sales, they are arming—

Senator GRAHAM. Let us put it this way. If the Russians said we want you gone tomorrow, would it matter to Assad?

General DEMPSEY. Absolutely.

Senator GRAHAM. It would be a game-changer, would it not, Admiral Winnefeld?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I certainly do, but Assad is going to fight to the death I think.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that if Russia said to Assad we no longer support you, it would be the ultimate game-changer?

Admiral WINNEFELD. It would be a very important game-changer, absolutely.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you. Do you see Russia doing that?

Admiral WINNEFELD. No, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. If he stays versus him going, what is the most catastrophic outcome for us? If he wins over time and he does not leave versus having to deal with the fact that we kicked him out because we said he had to go, what is worse for us? Him staying or going?

General DEMPSEY. Well, we have said that it is the Nation's policy that Assad must go.

Senator GRAHAM. So that means it is worse for us for him to stay and we not be able to achieve our policy. Do you agree with that?

General DEMPSEY. That is my interpretation.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with that, Admiral Winnefeld?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir, I do.

Senator GRAHAM. Will he be in power next year if nothing changes? Your best military advice. If we keep just where we are at, Iran is helping him, do you agree they are all in in helping Assad?

General DEMPSEY. I do.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree that Hezbollah is helping Assad?

General DEMPSEY. Absolutely.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree that Russia is helping Assad?

General DEMPSEY. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. If nothing changes, if we do not change our game, will he be in power a year from now?

General DEMPSEY. I think likely so.

Senator GRAHAM. What would that mean for the king of Jordan? Will he be in power a year from now?

General DEMPSEY. As I have said, I have met with him and he is concerned that the demographics in his nation—

Senator GRAHAM. Right. You are dead right. He told me he did not think he would be here in another year because there will be a million Syrian refugees and it is destabilizing Jordan. Do you agree with that?

General DEMPSEY. That is his concern. That is right.

Senator GRAHAM. What would that mean for the region and us if the king of Jordan is gone a year from now and Assad is in power a year from now? Would that be a good thing or a bad thing?

General DEMPSEY. He is a strong ally. It would be a bad thing.

Senator GRAHAM. It would be a horrible thing for the Mideast, would it not?

General DEMPSEY. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. If this war in Syria keeps going on and Assad is still in power a year from now, what effect would it have on Iraq?

General DEMPSEY. It is already destabilizing western Iraq.

Senator GRAHAM. Iraq would just begin to fall apart at a faster rate—do you agree with that—because it is destabilizing the country.

General DEMPSEY. That would certainly be a possible scenario.

Senator GRAHAM. From the Israelis' point of view, the likelihood of Hezbollah getting Russian-made advanced weapons, if he is still in power a year from now—does that go up or down?

General DEMPSEY. From the Israeli standpoint, up.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes. From Israel's standpoint, one of the worst nightmares for them, short of an Iranian nuclear weapon, would be Hezbollah getting advanced weapons sold to Assad by Russia, and that likelihood would go up if he is still in power a year from now.

General DEMPSEY. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. We will talk in the second round about sequestration. Thank you both for your answers.

Chairman LEVIN. If we can finish the first round by noon at least, there would be a very brief second round. That is my current intention, which I have shared with the ranking member.

Senator McCaskill?

Senator McCaskill. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just when I think we have made real progress on wartime contracting, something happens and I realize that we have still miles to go before we really have got a handle on this.

The latest incident that has come to my attention is a \$34 million military base in Leatherneck in Afghanistan. When the marines on the ground found out this was going to be built, they sent the word up they do not need it, do not want it. And that was in May of 2010. In February of 2011, contracts were issued, and the building was built.

And now we know it is never going to be occupied, probably going to be demolished because it was done according to U.S. wiring standards. So for the Afghanistan army to take it over, for the National forces there to take it over, it would be quite an investment for them to convert the building for their use.

I understand an investigation is ongoing. I questioned Mr. Jenman about this the other day. But I need to hear from you, General Dempsey, that you are committed to getting to the bottom of this because if we do not fix accountability in this instance, whoever pulled the trigger on that expenditure really needs to be disciplined. In my opinion, they should be fired because we have got to start sending a signal that when the people are saying do not build it, it is a waste of money, that it does not get built. Are you aware of this situation?

General DEMPSEY. Absolutely, Senator. You have my commitment that we will get to the bottom of it.

If I could share just a bit of good news, we have—so this one was not caught, but we have de-obligated about \$1.3 billion in contracting for U.S. Forces Afghanistan and a similar amount, probably twice that amount, for the Afghan security forces.

Senator MCCASKILL. That is good. I appreciate that very much.

There has been discussion around military sexual assault that our allies have gone to a different system. And the reason that this was talked about was in the context that Canada and Europe had gone to a different system in order to provide more protection for victims. We have had a chance now to take a really close look at those countries and what happened, and it is my understanding those changes in their system resulted from a concern that there was not adequate due process protections for perpetrators. Is that your understanding as well, General Dempsey?

General DEMPSEY. That is correct. And based on our last hearing on the subject, we have done a lot of research into why our allies, the five other nations, went that path, and it is not just because they wanted to protect the accused, but they were also mandated to do it by human rights courts in the European Union.

Senator MCCASKILL. The other argument that is being made about leaving this in the hand of just prosecutors, civilian and/or JAG prosecutors, is that this would increase reporting. I have had an opportunity to look at the numbers. In Canada, we actually have 176 in 2007, 166 in 2008, 166 in 2009, 176 in 2010. I looked at the numbers in the UK. Their numbers have actually gone down over the last several years in terms of reports from 54 to 40 to 40. In Australia, they have been stable at 82, 86, 84 over the last several years.

In Israel, there had been a fact about reporting going up when they changed part of their system when it related to lesser sexual offenses a few years ago. There was testimony about their reporting going up 80 percent. If you look back at the numbers—now, these are sex-related offenses total in the military. So everybody gets an understanding of the difference between the enormity of the challenges in our military and what they are looking at in Israel, 26 in 2009, 20 in 2010, 14 in 2011, and 27 in 2012. So yes, there is an 80 percent increase when they changed this between

2011 and 2012, but they only got back to the numbers that they had a few years previously before the change was made.

Are you all aware in the research you have done that changing the system has resulted in an increased reporting anywhere in the world?

General DEMPSEY. There is no analytical evidence nor anecdotal evidence that it has increased reporting. And furthermore, what my counterparts tell me is it has slowed the system down.

Senator MCCASKILL. You mentioned, Admiral Winnefeld, in your testimony earlier that you all have taken a look at prosecutors' decisions in isolation. And I have some knowledge of this. There was discipline meted out in my office when I found out that prosecutors in our warrant desk, which was our intake desk, were getting lobbied by some of the trial prosecutors on their decisions because they did not want any losers. They did not want them to take cases that were going to reflect poorly on their won/lost record because when you are a prosecutor, there is a won/lost record. When you take a case to trial, you either win or you lose. And so your status among your peers and in some instances your upward mobility in your job could depend on just your conviction rate. So when you isolate them with this decision, then there certainly could be instances where you would have a prosecutor that did not want to take a close one, that did not want a ?he said/she said.?

Do you have additional information that you can share with this committee in terms of numbers of the number of times that civilian prosecutors have said no, military prosecutors have said no, but there are victims out there today that have had justice because the commander said yes?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I do, and I will give you a couple of examples. The Marine Corps has had 28 cases. They have looked back to 2010, 28 cases where civilian prosecutors declined to take the case. And of those, 16 of them the Marine Corps was able to obtain a conviction at court martial, 57 percent. So those are 16 perpetrators that are no longer walking the street and 16 victims who received justice who would not have received it otherwise.

The more startling numbers are from the Army, and I will repeat them. The Army has looked at 49 cases in the last 2 years. 35 of them—actually 14 of them are still in process. We do not know what is going to happen with those cases. They are still in the trial system. 35 of them have been completed. 25 of those, or 71 percent, resulted in a conviction at a court martial. Two additional ones were plea bargained down to a punitive discharge. So that takes the number up to 77 percent of these cases that civilian prosecutors would not take that resulted in some serious action taken against a perpetrator. There are some that were acquitted, understandably. Most of the ones who were found guilty have done hard time, are doing hard time, and have been given a punitive discharge from the military. And these were all done inside the chain of command.

I would add, Senator McCaskill, some of these are very heinous cases that the DAs would not take. One of them was a 10-year-old autistic girl who was sexually assaulted. We took the case. The commander insisted on it, and a conviction was obtained.

Senator MCCASKILL. Well, this is hard. We all have the same goal. But I do want to say, as I close this questioning, that anybody

who characterizes me as someone who is protecting the Pentagon, that somehow I am in cahoots with the Pentagon trying to hurt sexual assault victims, with all due respect to you guys, I think you are terrific, but there is nobody who will be further in front of the line to kick you until you are senseless if we do not get this problem under control. This is not victims versus the Pentagon. And anybody who is characterizing that is doing a disservice to victims and is doing a disservice to the military and doing a disservice to the members of this committee who have spent hours trying to find the right way to make sure that we prosecute more cases effectively within the military.

And I thank you both very much.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Mr. Chairman, if I can take 10 seconds.

Senator McCASKILL. Yes.

Admiral WINNEFELD. I would like to just reinforce what General Dempsey said a moment, that we actually are very grateful for the attention that the entire committee has given to this. It has been very helpful to us.

And I also want to say that I look forward to our next chance to have you and other people with prosecutorial experience over to the Pentagon, as we have done before, and get your thoughts, show you what we are doing, get your expertise in there. I think that is a very productive opportunity.

Senator McCASKILL. You do not need to worry about me being invited. As many of your JAGs will know, I call them. I am not reaching out because you guys are calling plays on this. I mean, you know, I was just infuriated at the article that was written that this is somehow you guys pulling strings over here telling us what to do. Nothing could be further from the truth. And I appreciate both of you and your commitment to this, but believe me, we are not going anywhere.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you. And if I may just take 30 seconds before Senator Chambliss speaks, there was an implication in an article in Politico that the amendment which was adopted by this committee was somehow or other cleared or shared with the Pentagon. And that is not true. Are you aware of that?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Not that I am aware of.

General DEMPSEY. No.

Chairman LEVIN. A two-page article suggesting that somehow or other the Pentagon screened or impacted the language which we offered in a public session in this committee that led to the adoption of a bipartisan amendment, part of an article that suggested that somehow or other the Pentagon wrote something or screened something.

What they did, very properly so, was asked by the subcommittee that adopted language on this subject for its reaction. We do that all the time before the bill is marked up. The subcommittee then wrote its language under Senator Gillibrand's leadership. Wrote its language after consultation appropriately with the Pentagon. Totally appropriately. But the amendment that was adopted by this committee on a bipartisan vote was not shared with the Pentagon.

I do not know that the folks at Politico that wrote that two-page article implying to the contrary want to correct their article. But in fairness, I believe they should.

Senator NELSON. Mr. Chairman, may I just say on a point of personal privilege on behalf of Senator McCaskill, the implication that she is bought off the by the Pentagon—she has been the spark plug in this whole thing from day one. And I want her to know how much I appreciate that.

Chairman LEVIN. Her prosecutorial experience, I must say, is invaluable to this committee, not just on this subject but on a lot of other subjects, including this whole contracting problem that she has delved into with such tenacity and effect.

Senator Chambliss?

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thanks for your leadership and your impassioned leadership on this issue of sexual assault. I am not going to go into questioning. I think it has been thoroughly vetted, gentlemen. But we know where you are and that you are trying to rectify a very serious situation. But I think you have got a thorough understanding that this committee, as a total committee, is upset with what is going on in that realm in every branch of our military. And we have got to fix it. The system is broken. And the chairman's leadership on this and, as he said, in a bipartisan way I think addresses it fairly. But we will look forward to that debate on the floor.

General Dempsey, in your answers to advance questions from the committee, you said—and I quote—we are at risk of strategy and solvency if sequestration is implemented as currently presented by law. The words “strategy and solvency” sounds like sending unprepared troops into combat and not being able to take action against threats to national security and not being able to assist allies and partners in unstable regions. Is that what you meant?

General DEMPSEY. Yes, sir. Maybe even more simply, it is the mismatch of aspirations and abilities.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I want to go back, General Dempsey, to Syria. Again, it has been thoroughly talked about here, but I am a little bit confused. I heard your response to Senator McCain's questioning. And here is kind of the way I see where we are with respect to Syria right now and your participation in the process.

You have been in place about 2 years, as we all know. During that 2 years, the conflict in Syria has been going on the entire time. There has been virtually an uncontrolled slaughter going on inside of Syria, and I note that even the President's nominee to be Ambassador to the United Nations said yesterday in her hearing that the failure of the UN Security Council to respond to the slaughter in Syria is a disgrace that history will judge harshly. I agree with that. But it is also a fact that the United States has kind of sat by and watched what is happening over there and we have really had our hands behind our back.

Now, you have been in place for 2 years. You have been the principal military advisor to the President on this issue and others. Has the President followed your advice on the involvement of the United States in Syria?

General DEMPSEY. The President has asked for options, and we have provided them. On the issues, has he followed my advice, the

issue is whether—there are two issues at work. Could we and should we? I have advised him on “could we.” He nor anyone else has actually—we have not gotten into a conversation about “should we” except as it relates to the current path, which is one focused primarily on building a moderate opposition.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Well, I am taking that to mean then that the President has listened to your options but apparently you have not picked a side or been forceful in what you think the President ought to do. Am I correct?

General DEMPSEY. Well, sir, let me talk about the role of the Chairman because it keeps coming back to that. It is my responsibility to provide options about the use of force and how they would contribute to a broader strategy not in isolation.

I am reluctant to—in fact, I am unwilling actually to discuss my advice to the President on whether we should use force while that deliberation is ongoing.

To the point about what is my responsibility to this committee, my responsibility to this committee is to have the same kind of conversations with you as we have on options and on what the military instrument of power could do in the context of a broader strategy.

But the decision on whether to use force is fundamentally a political decision and one that is being deliberated even frequently with regard to Syria. But for me to advocate it would absolutely put me in what I have deemed to be an inappropriate position with both the President and this committee.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Did you advocate for a no-fly zone or against a no-fly zone?

General DEMPSEY. That is the point, sir. I have not advocated nor opposed any of those options. I have explained what they would do to the situation.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Well, here is my dilemma, General. You are the top military advisor to the President. Syria is the most significant internal military conflict going on today. It has the capability of providing future unrest to that part of the world that may be permanent. And there has been no change in U.S. policy from a military standpoint in Syria during your 2 years.

Now, if we approve you for another 2 years, confirm you for another 2 years, then is there going to be a change in policy in Syria over the next 2 years, or are we just going to keep doing what we are doing, which is watching innocent people slaughtered?

General DEMPSEY. Well, Senator, I would hate to take that burden entirely on myself to determine whether the situation in Syria will change over the next 2 years. You can be sure that as we develop options to be considered in military instrument of power, that I will articulate whether I think they will be effective, what are the risks involved to U.S. forces, what are the opportunity costs.

You know, look, let me tell you what has changed in the last 2 years. We are far more involved on the Korean Peninsula at higher states of readiness. We are far more involved in the Gulf, higher states of readiness. We continue to manage the conflict in Afghanistan. And so there are some significant risks we are accruing while we also are engaged in trying to determine how to match ends, ways, and means in the face of sequestration.

Senator CHAMBLISS. In closing, let me just say that Secretary Hagel in a recent announcement directed a 20 percent cut in the number of top ranking officers and senior civilians at the Pentagon by 2019. I applaud that move. I think that is something that has got to be done. And we look forward to as a committee to working with you, assuming you are confirmed, to carrying out that directive by the Secretary. It is not going to be easy. It is not going to be pleasant, but everybody has got to share in this pain, including our top ranking folks.

General DEMPSEY. No question. If I could just respond very briefly. There are a couple of things we should do, Senator, whether sequestration was hanging over our heads or not. One of them is that, is to make ourselves more efficient at the institutional level. And the other is compensation and health care, and we are going to need your help to do that.

Admiral WINNEFELD. If I could just 1 second. I do not want to leave the committee with the impression that has been in the press that it is only the top brass that are being reduced by 20 percent. It is the entire staffs that are being reduced by 20 percent. This is a significant cut and we offered it. We believe that we have to become more efficient and never waste a crisis. And so it is the entire staff, not only the joint staff but the OSD staff, but the combatant commanders' staffs we are going to trim by 20 percent over the next 5 years.

Chairman LEVIN. Just if I heard you correctly, it is not just that you support it but that you offered it. Is that correct?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Thank you, Senator Chambliss.

Senator Hagan?

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Dempsey, Admiral Winnefeld, thank you very much for your service to our country and for being here today.

General Dempsey, on just this past Monday, I had the great pleasure to be at the FRC-East at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point on Monday to welcome the arrival of the first 35B that was scheduled for modifications. And I know how important the F-35B is to the Marine Corps, to our National security, and to the local North Carolina communities that support it. And this was certainly reiterated to me during my visit on Monday.

Like you and like the members of this committee, I am very worried about the damage that sequestration is already doing to the Department and to our National security. Most of the members of the civilian workforce that I met with on Monday had just had their first furlough day the Friday before, which I think is a harsh reminder of Congress' inability to find a solution here. We actually have 19,000 civilians working for DOD that are on furlough in North Carolina.

But please know that I remain dedicated to finding a balanced bipartisan solution to sequestration, and what I really worry about are those in Washington who underestimate the damage that sequestration will have if this is allowed to continue in fiscal year 2014 and beyond. My question is—I think it is important that Congress and the people hear directly from senior leaders like yourself

about the impact that this is going to have if it is allowed to continue.

Can you just give a few examples of the impact that it might have on the F-35B and other modernization programs, as well as on the local communities that support them?

General DEMPSEY. Yes, let me give you a very brief, generalized answer. The Vice Chairman sits on most of the meetings where the tradeoffs are made in things like modernization.

But the point is that, as I said, it is too far and too fast. So at the beginning of this period, we will suffer most prominently in readiness and in modernization. We have to take money where we can get it. Later on, as the force shrinks, we will be more ready but we will be less modernized than we think we need to be, and in my view we will have forces inadequate to achieve the strategy as currently conceived and we will have to look back at how we might change our strategy.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Specifically on the F-35, our first priority right now is to finish the development of that program, and we requested some money in the reprogramming authority to get that done in fiscal year 2013 to keep the STD effort on track.

Because of the importance of this program, we are doing everything we can to protect the numbers as the Department finalizes the lots 6 and 7 prices, and I do not want to stray outside of my authority. This is really Under Secretary of Defense for AT&L Lane. But we are committed to this program, and we really want to ramp up production as soon as we can to get the economies of scale that we need in order to make this a productive program. So the F-35 is a very important program to us. There is no question about it.

Senator HAGAN. You know, it is also my understanding on sequestration that the DOD civilian supervisors—they received notice just recently that if they knowledges that the employees that report to them work more than the allotted hours during their furloughs, even when it is voluntary on their part, that those supervisors, these civilian supervisors, are subject to fines up to \$5,000 and potential jail time. And when I realized that—you know, there are legal guidelines, I know, that have to be followed. We certainly do not want to have furloughed employees to have to involuntarily work without pay, but to me this seems to go too far. So I am troubled that these supervisors could face these unbelievable penalties because they have got motivated workers who really are dedicated to the National security of our country despite the furloughs, and we cannot fault them when they want to continue their mission, once again, because Congress has not acted.

So what are your thoughts on this matter? And how does one find the right balance here?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Well, first of all, Senator, I would make a shout-out to our civilian employees in the Department who are fantastic. These are people who under ordinary conditions work extra hours because they believe so much in what they are doing, and they are just tremendous.

I am not a lawyer and I do not have the legal background in this. I believe that the restrictions you are referring to when you are

furloughed are legal restrictions, and I think we are just trying to stay within the letter of the law.

But I could not agree with you more on the overall principle and the sentiment that these are American patriots who want to do the best they can for their country. We are cutting out a day's pay and they still want to do work for us. I mean, what more can you ask for from these great folks?

So the sooner we can resolve this, the better. I know the Department is working hard, if we can, to reduce the number of furlough days this year. There are no guarantees. The comptroller is working on that. But it is a real tragic situation for these great Americans.

Senator HAGAN. And even these legal ramifications—they are not supposed to even look at the BlackBerry on the days of furlough.

The previous two quadrennial defense reviews have mandated significant growth in our special operations forces and enablers that directly support their operations. Admiral Winnefeld, in response to the committee's prehearing policy questions, you said given the financial downturn that we face, we must balance the need for soft capabilities with our need to address other capability demands in light of increased budgetary pressures.

Do you believe that previously directed growth in the size of SOF should be retained despite the current budgetary pressures, and how should special operations capabilities be prioritized compared to the other capability demands that you referenced?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I have to be quite honest in telling you that if we get into the full BCA caps, the full sequester, what we call "sequester forever" in the Department, that we are probably going to have to level off SOF growth because there are so many other programs that are going to be shrinking in size. It is sort of the philosophy if you are level, then you are doing pretty well in this budget environment. If you are growing, it is really unusual. The only thing I know of that will grow will be the cyber forces, and everything else is going to be coming down in size. So I think keeping it in perspective that leveling off SOF is probably about as good as we can do if we get to the full BCA cuts.

Senator HAGAN. Even with the demands that we see around the world today?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Even with the demands. You know, our SOF forces are fantastic. They are doing very important work around the world, no question. We have a considerable amount of SOF forces in Afghanistan doing counterinsurgency. That will end at the end of 2014. We were hoping to take that capacity and bring it home and do a couple of important things with it. One is to rest the force a little bit. These folks have been going very hard for the last decade. Another would be to enhance our building partnership capacity efforts across the world. We certainly want to rest the force. We may have to trim back a little bit on the building partnership capacity just because of the budget cuts. And again, leveling off—you are pretty lucky if you are only leveling off under these circumstances.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Hagan.

Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Dempsey and Admiral Winnefeld, thank you both very much for your service to this country and for your willingness to continue to serve under what are very difficult times.

General Dempsey, I very much appreciate your coming to New Hampshire and your visiting both Pease and our National Guard and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and meeting with a number of the businesses in New Hampshire that help make up part of the great defense industrial base we have in this country.

Many people on the committee have expressed their concerns about sequestration. I know it is something that you both care very much about. One of the things that we heard from the businesses in the meeting that you had in New Hampshire was their concern about the uncertainty and what that means in terms of their future ability to provide the support that our military needs in order to do their job.

I wonder if you could speak to whether this is something you are hearing from other parts of the country and then how concerned you are that continuing cuts from sequestration might have a very damaging impact on the defense industrial base in this country.

General DEMPSEY. Thank you, Senator.

What I found most interesting in that roundtable were two things. The big corporations—I will not name names, but the big corporations have enough flexibility that they can kind of weather the storm and are likely to still be there when we need them. It is the small businesses who do not have that kind of flexibility who I think we risk losing in two ways. One is I suspect they will look—well, they said it. They are going to look increasingly overseas. And the second thing they said was that their ability to innovate is being reduced. And so we are losing in several ways that I think could have a long-term negative effect.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

The other thing you have both talked about is the importance of the people who serve this country, both who serve actively in the armed forces, as well as those people who support your mission in the civilian capacity. And one of the concerns that I have had is relative to the workers that we have who have the degrees in the STEM fields, science, technology, engineering, and math.

And looking at the statistics for the people we will need to do the work of our military and its support in the future, the statistics do not look very good because an average age of an aerospace worker in the industry is 44. 26 percent of the aerospace workforce became eligible for retirement in 2008. 50 percent of the Navy's science and technology professionals will be retirement eligible by 2020. And those statistics go on.

So can either of you speak to concerns that you have about how sequestration might be affecting our ability to recruit the people who have the degrees and the skills that we are going to need in the future? If we are looking at sequestration not just in 2013 but 2014, 2015, 2016, for the next 9 years, what does that do to our civilian workforce that supports your mission?

General DEMPSEY. I will ask the Vice in a moment here. But reflecting back to the trip to the Portsmouth Naval Yard, one of the other things I was unaware of was the apprenticeship program

where they take some of the folks with the skill set that you described—30 of them, as I remember, some significant number—from incredible schools in the Northeast notably and they build into them this passion that I saw in the workforce there in support of the United States Navy and, in fact, in support of the Coast Guard as well. It is going to be simply a matter of mathematics. They are going to do less of that. And so I think we will lose some of those.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Fundamentally, the real challenge we have under the worst sequester scenario is the steepness of this cut, and what we have found over time and we understand very well this time around is that it is very hard to get force structure out quickly. Force structure meaning people. We cannot get people out fast enough. And what that means is the only other levers you have are readiness and modernization. And readiness and modernization are very technical things. So we will be jettisoning basically a number of modernization programs or vastly trimming them down, and we will be reducing readiness which includes depot work and that sort of stuff which is also technical. So I worry about that.

The other thing is that as we get smaller, the tendency under the rules we have is that sort of the last person in is the first person out. And so that is our seed corn, all these young, technically adept folks that are thinking of coming in or who are already in. If they are first to go, we are going to lose them. Then we are going to have the effects that you talked about where we have a force that stays and retires and there is nothing to backfill them. So it really is something we have got to watch closely. I know Frank Kendall is worried about it. I know Ash Carter is worried about it. And it is something we have got to be very mindful of as we move forward.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I certainly share that concern.

Let me ask you both. One of the things that Senator McCain and I have worked on that is language both in the immigration reform bill that passed the Senate, as well as in the Defense Authorization Act that this committee has done, would deal with the number of Afghans and Iraqis who have been helpful to the United States and the international force who are concerned about their safety once we get past 2014 and the NATO force withdraws.

I wonder if you could talk about how concerned you are about that and what kind of message it would send to other people in the future who might be willing to cooperate with us in these kinds of conflicts if we are not able to help provide safety for those people who have cooperated.

General DEMPSEY. Having lived with those men and women, I strongly support the effort. But let me turn it over to the Vice who has been tracking it most closely.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Just to give you a sense, actually yesterday we had a deputies committee meeting that I was unable to attend but sent someone on this exact issue, special immigrant visas and the like to get these folks in who have really literally risked their lives to enable our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. So it has the attention of the National Security staff. It has our attention, and we will continue to push it in the right direction.

And I would just say if you hear anything that is making you uncomfortable, do not hesitate to talk to us. We will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. And I know that Senator McCain and I stand ready to be of any help we can, and I know it has the support of this committee as well. So thank you very much.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator SESSIONS?

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your leadership of this committee. You lead us in a way that gets most of us to vote together every time we bring a bill out, and I think that is a testament to bipartisanship in the defense of America.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much.

Senator SESSIONS. General Dempsey, particularly I just want to ask you to reaffirm—and I know you will do so—your responsibility to share with this committee and Congress your best military judgment about matters and that you will internally—when asked by the commander in chief to give your opinion, you will give your best, unvarnished military opinion and not be influenced by politics or pressures of any kind.

General DEMPSEY. I can assure you that is what has been my intent and will remain my intent in the future.

Senator SESSIONS. Admiral Winnefeld, would you likewise—

Admiral WINNEFELD. That is what we have been doing and what we continue to do. Yes, sir.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, I thank you. It is really important because we have a lot of significant agenda items that are occurring that will set policy for years to come whether it is the number of personnel, our involvement around the world, whether it is missile defense. And in particular, we are beginning to have some hearings on our nuclear capabilities. The public proposal of the President that he would like to reduce by one-third our already substantially reduced nuclear arsenal raises a serious concern to me. And we will be asking you as time goes by your best judgment on that. Of course, it goes beyond the technical issues to our role in the world and the confidence our allies have in us also.

General Dempsey, one of the more amazing things to me that I believe has caused a great deal of unnecessary problems with the sequester and the reduction in spending was the fact that this was passed in August of 2011, and the President said in a national debate it was not going to happen but it was the law of the United States. He signed it. And I frankly at the time wondered how it was going to be fixed. I had my doubts that we would get it fixed. And the President has indicated basically he wants more taxes and more spending and he will not find any other reductions in spending anywhere else to relieve the burdens on the military.

But I would just like to get one thing straight with regard to the difficulties you have faced this year. My understanding is that you made no plans and made no cuts in the first 6 months of this year even though you were aware that this was the law in 2011, and as a result, you have had to make more dramatic cuts, more unwise reductions to try to finish this year within the budget law that

you have been told you have to finish under. Has that been a problem for you and why did we not plan to reduce spending all year instead of making up all of that in the last 6 months?

General DEMPSEY. It has been a problem, Senator. We found ourselves with 80 percent spent with half the year to go. And the answer as to how did we get to that position, you know, that was the budget guidance we received.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, you got that from the executive branch.

General DEMPSEY. I get my marching orders from the Department, but I assume they got it from the Office of Management and Budget.

Senator SESSIONS. And I do remain concerned about the impact on the Defense Department. It is not just that I have, as a member of this committee and personal views, a strong affinity for the men and women who serve us in uniform, but because half of the reductions in spending that were included in the Budget Control Act have fallen on one-sixth of the United States Government spending, the Defense Department. So this is a disproportionate reduction in spending in my opinion to our Defense Department, and it is at a level that is troubling to me.

I am ranking on the Budget Committee and I have seen the numbers. And we should look for other areas within our Government to find some savings too. For example, Medicaid has no cuts. Social Security has no cuts. Medicare had a little but it did not help the Defense Department. That was used to reduce spending reductions in other departments. Food stamps has gone up four-fold in the last 10 or 12 years, had zero cuts. So we are just at a point that we have got to work out—figure how to deal with this. And I do believe you are being asked to take a disproportionate cut, and Congress should work with the President, the commander in chief, and he needs to help us work through a way to spread out some of this belt tightening so that other departments and agencies in the Government tighten their belt too.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much. Thank you for your comments as well about me, Senator Sessions.

Now, Senator, do I have a card? I do not. So is Senator King here? If not, Senator Kaine? Senator Nelson?

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your public service.

Let us talk first about upgrading the ISR fleet. You are moving from manned platforms to a combination of unmanned and manned platforms. And the law directs the Vice Chairman and the Under Secretary to certify annually that the Navy remains in compliance in supporting the needs of the combatant commanders, and the Navy has certified compliance. And so my interest in this is that in the President's budget, the Navy plans to gradually draw down your manned platforms before going over to the P-8 platform and then to field a fleet of MQ-4C Tritons, the UAVs.

Now, it is my understanding that the Secretary of the Navy is supportive of this position. Have you all spoken to the combatant commanders to confirm if these ISR capabilities fulfill their requirements?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I have not recently covered that particular slice of the combatant commander requirements. They are going to have their integrated priority lists due to us here over this fall, and we will scan those. We also get constant feedback from their J-8 organizations, but I would have to take it up for the record on whether specifically in that area we are answering their needs.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator NELSON. Okay. I would appreciate it. I think that there is some concern in the Secretary's Office about this transition, and to see that those manned platforms are utilized so that there is not a gap while we are transitioning over and getting the combined fleet between unmanned and manned.

Now, once we are withdrawing from Afghanistan, there is going to be a lot of ISR assets that will come back and be distributed throughout the combatant commands. I sure wish that you all would take a look at what sequestration is doing to us in the Southern Command and the huge success that they have had interdiction of drugs coming north. As a matter of fact, just in last year, Colombia itself interdicted 207 metric tons. As it started to come through Central America toward the U.S. border, the JIATF, which is the joint task force going after these drugs—that interdicted 152 additional metric tons. And by the time it gets to the southern border of the United States, then they were interdicting another 10 metric tons. Well, you can see that the big part has already been interdicted before it ever got there, thanks to a lot of U.S. Southern Command's efforts in the joint task force. And so I would surely appreciate it, as these ISR assets are going to be available, that you will consider Southern Command as a part to use those ISR assets. And I know you will.

But would you just for the record state what are going to be the long-term effects of the sequester on the counternarcotics mission?

General DEMPSEY. Well, in general, I will tell you that we will be able to do less in the maritime transit zones for the immediate future because of some combination of sequestration and also maintenance that has been deferred over time. And I am concerned about it. In fact, I met over the past several months with both my Canadian and my Mexican counterparts to see if we can collaboratively find a way to mitigate the risk.

Admiral WINNEFELD. We have just had to make some very difficult choices in the current environment with readiness declining and the Navy unable to support as many ship deployments as they would like to, as you well know. We have had some considerable success, as you point out, with interdicting drugs coming from Central and South America in the maritime environment and other environments. So we are going to have to allocate resources. As the Chairman mentioned, it is about balancing ends, ways, and means, and we will just have to keep our eye on it. Absolutely.

Senator NELSON. Well, I will tell you where you are going to be additionally stressed is if we are fortunate to get an immigration reform bill and if it stays in the present posture that it passed the Senate where all this additional money is being used to enhance the effectiveness of the land border, what is going to happen to all

those drugs and, indeed, human smuggling it is going to go right around on the maritime border.

Now, I think this was an oversight. They would not accept Senator Wicker's and my amendment to enhance by just \$1 billion, DHS, the Coast Guard, and helping DHS with unmanned platforms.

The Navy blimp is also an asset that can be used on that. I have ridden in that blimp. It can dwell for a long time. The amount of gas that it takes for a 24-hour mission is the same amount of gas that it takes for an F-16 to crank up and just run out to the runway. So it is a cost effective platform for observation of something like a maritime border.

Hopefully, if we can pass the immigration reform, we are going to be able to enhance that maritime border. But this is going to all the more bring into question the desperate need to avoid sequester in a place like Southern Command, not even to speak of all the other commands. I spent some time with Admiral McRaven, and he walked me through what is going to happen to Special Operations Command if we have this sequester continue. And it is absolutely ridiculous that we would be doing this to ourselves not only shooting ourselves in the foot but starting to shoot ourselves up the torso.

So I wish you would take a look at the ISR assets as they come back and allocate some of them to Southern Command. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Nelson.

We are going to have a very brief second round of about 2 minutes for those of us who are here. We have got a vote. I cannot see that clock, but it is getting close to 12:15. Is it there already? Anyway, I think we have a vote at 12:15. So I am going to have a 2-minute second round.

General, I want to find a way to work through the options issue on Syria not in 2 minutes but I want to work through it because I think there is a real uncertainty among some of us as to what your role is in terms of telling us your personal opinion on things, what your role is in terms of giving advice to the President, in terms of the options that you have laid out, the pluses, minuses, strengths, weaknesses of each of those options, whether they could be effective, what are the costs, what are the opportunity costs, and so forth.

And what I am going to ask you to do for the record is to give us an unclassified list of options and your personal assessment of the pros and cons of those options. Now, in some of those pros and cons and your personal assessment, it will be pretty obvious that you are not going to recommend something. But I am not going to ask you point blank which of these options you recommend. You have said you are not going to tell us. You cannot tell us or you have not decided. For whatever reason, you are not going to tell us what your preferred option is, but what you are willing to do is go through with us the pluses and minuses of each of the various options. And that is what I am going to ask you to do in a fairly thorough way for the record.

If you need to give us a classified annex, that is fine. But I want to work very hard to try to work through this issue of the options in Syria.

Now, you are aware of the fact that I personally have favored arming, training the opposition. I personally, indeed, want to consider and I have even gone beyond that talking about stand-off air-strikes against certain facilities. That is just my own personal opinion so you know where I am coming from. You and I have talked about it. I am not trying to persuade you that that is the right position or should be your position, but that is my public position.

So my question to you is whether or not you are willing to give to us an unclassified list of options and the strengths and weaknesses, the costs and effectiveness and so forth of each of those options.

General DEMPSEY. Absolutely, Senator, as well as the framework of a strategy in which they might make sense, which I am happy to do.

Chairman LEVIN. Anything else you want to add to it. I do not want to limit you in any way. As long as it includes that, it may help us work through this issue.

General DEMPSEY. Yes, but I would ask you take my point even now that the decision whether to use force is one that I must communicate personally to the President. And as you have seen me do in the past, if the President takes my advice and you ask me, I will tell you that he took my advice. If he does not, I am more than willing to tell you no. My recommendation was something else. And he is certainly under no obligation to take my advice.

Chairman LEVIN. Well, you have indicated that you are not going to share with us your opinion, if you have one, on whether or not to use force.

General DEMPSEY. While it is being deliberated.

Chairman LEVIN. While it is being deliberated. I am not asking you to do that. I think if you just are able to do what I have asked you to do, it may be clear that at least some of those options you think are not wise options just from your pros and cons assessment.

General DEMPSEY. Right. I thought we got at it at some level in the classified briefing.

Chairman LEVIN. But we need an unclassified. You said you are willing to lay out options and to show pros and cons of options and whether they can be effective, what are the costs, various costs, and so forth. So if you will do that, it may be a step that would be a constructive, positive step. And if you can do that within the next 4 or 5 days, we would appreciate it.

General DEMPSEY. Sure.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Senator Ayotte, I believe. No. I may be wrong.

Senator AYOTTE. I am next but I am going to defer first to Senator Graham and then go.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. Senator Graham?

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, Chairman Dempsey, back to Afghanistan. If no troops were left behind for whatever reason in 2015, we just pulled

out and there were no American forces left behind, the zero option, very quickly what is the likely outcome in Afghanistan?

General DEMPSEY. Although I have told you that the progress of the security forces has been significant, they would not have the level of confidence to sustain themselves over time if it happens that precipitously.

Senator GRAHAM. And it would lead to what I believe would be a fractured state, a larger safe haven for al Qaeda types, and over time would be a disaster. Do you agree with that?

General DEMPSEY. Those are all high risks.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay, thank you.

Admiral Winnefeld, sequestration. In terms of the Air Force, if sequestration—let us start with the Navy. Over a 10-year period, how many ships will we have in the Navy after 10 years of sequestration?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I do not have the exact number for you.

Senator GRAHAM. Somebody says 232 ships.

Admiral WINNEFELD. It could be that low.

Senator GRAHAM. Would that be just like crazy?

Admiral WINNEFELD. It would certainly impact our ability to respond to contingencies and to have forward presence and deter—

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I think it is crazy.

One-third of the fighter force is grounded today. They are beginning to fly again because you have robbed Peter to pay Paul. But has the effect of sequestration grounded one-third of our fighter force?

Admiral WINNEFELD. It has grounded nine fighter squadrons, which is not one-third of the fighter force, but there are other squadrons that are flying at a lower rate—at a rate lower.

Senator GRAHAM. What would it take for the enemy to knock out nine Air Force squadrons?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I know where you are coming from and it would be heck of a lot.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, if I were the Iranians, I would send a thank you note to the Congress for grounding more Air Force planes than they could on their own. So to say I am upset about this is an understatement.

Finally, what if, General Dempsey, the Congress could not find a way to reach a deal on funding the Government? Come October the 1st, we just cannot fund the Government and the politicians in Washington cannot come up with a budget and we had no money for our military. What signal would that be sending to our troops and to our enemies? What kind of national security impact would it be in the times in which we live if there was no agreement to fund the Government? What would it mean to our National security?

General DEMPSEY. You remember, Senator, I held up this slide showing that these kids that we send into harm's way trust us. I would have to assess that bond of trust would be broken.

Senator GRAHAM. As to our enemies, how would they take this?

General DEMPSEY. Well, I think they would be certainly happy at our demise.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator Ayotte?

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Winnefeld, when you look at the security of this country, what would you prioritize first?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I would prioritize first the survival of the Nation.

Senator AYOTTE. And would that mean protecting the homeland?

Admiral WINNEFELD. It would definitely.

Senator AYOTTE. So I know that earlier you were asked about our missile defense system, and you said that the first dollar we should spend is on the sensor to add discrimination power. Correct?

Admiral WINNEFELD. That is correct.

Senator AYOTTE. And I guess I am kind of dumbfounded by it because, as I understand it, that was not in the budget proposal put forth by the Department. Why was that if it was the number one?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I would have to review the budget documents to validate that. But one thing to remember is we have a new commander of the Missile Defense Agency, a new director there. He is doing an exceptionally good job. Vice Admiral Syring. And he, along with his technical experts, have studied this and they have come to the conclusion that you can get better shot doctrine if you get better discrimination. And he would hasten to add that if the threat gets worse, we are going to need more missiles as well, which is one of the reasons why—

Senator AYOTTE. Okay. And so let me follow that. You had said in your testimony that you have to watch the threat develop from Iran. In fact, in the recent interview that Prime Minister Netanyahu gave, he said that Iran is building ICBMs to reach the American mainland within a few years. Of course, that is consistent with what we have heard if 2015 is a potential date when Iran will have ICBM capability or could have to reach the mainland of the United States. Is that right?

Admiral WINNEFELD. It is an intelligence assessment. It shifts all the time, but 2015 is the current number when they could potentially have a capability.

Senator AYOTTE. 2015 is the number. I guess I am a little dumbfounded why we keep saying that there is no current military requirement for an east coast missile defense site when the priority of our Nation is to protect the homeland. And as I understand it, if we went, in terms of an EIS, to production of an east coast missile defense site, it would take about 6 years, would it not?

Admiral WINNEFELD. I do not know that it would take that long. I would have to get the exact numbers for you. But I think that when the EISs are done, closely on the heels of that we would have another threat assessment that is continually going on. And we would have to come to a decision fairly soon, I think, after that as to whether we would do an east coast missile field to start with.

Senator AYOTTE. When I look at the possibility of 2015 ICBM capability, I think the tail is wagging the dog in terms of how long it would take to put that up. And I know you said first dollar. What if you had second dollar of missile defense? What would you do with it?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Well, the first thing we want to do is get the CE-2 missiles working and get them into the silos in Alaska

to get the additional missiles we have talked about. That is going to take some time in and of itself to get that done.

The first dollar, as I mentioned, is the sensors so that we have this sort of ?quality has a quantity all its own? phenomenon where we have to shoot fewer missiles at the inbound threats. And if we can accomplish that, that will really help us.

And then assuming if the threat continues on a trajectory where Iran develops an ICBM, we may well need an east coast missile field in order to defend this country.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, when we met, you said—I think what you are saying today is the second dollar.

And by the way, we could do both at once if we wanted to in terms of protecting the homeland, could we not?

Admiral WINNEFELD. Physically we could, but in terms of—

Senator AYOTTE. If we allocated the resources for you to do it.

Admiral WINNEFELD. Right. And the question is is that the wisest use of the resources. It competes with everything else, but as you pointed out at the very beginning of this discussion, the highest priority is the defense of the Nation.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you both for being here. I appreciate your service to the country.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

Thank you both. We are hopeful that we will have a speedy markup and confirmation, but that will be up to the whole committee. But that would be my hope. Thank you. We thank your spouses, your wives who are here, your families again for their great support over the years.

And we will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the committee adjourned.]